

Sharon rejects return of refugees

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's hardline Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon said Sunday a final peace settlement in the Middle East would not mean the return of Palestinian refugees. "The problem of the refugees is an open wound that can only be solved with international cooperation," he told journalists. Sharon has been expected to head negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories, due to start in December. The issue of refugees who fled their homes when Israel was created in 1948, or after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1968, figures high on the agenda of the talks. The Palestinian side insists on their right to return. The United Nations estimates at more than 3.5 million the number of refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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Israeli security cabinet fails to reach conclusion on Lebanon quagmire

Agencies

A DIVIDED Israeli government met Sunday to review Israel's 20-year occupation of south Lebanon but broke off its discussions without reaching any firm conclusions.

"It's a complex debate which is going to take a long time," Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said after the meeting.

"Whatever the decision that is taken, it will influence the future shape of the northern border and discussions on such an issue cannot be completed in a day or two," he told Israel's privately run Channel Two television.

The security cabinet heard a report from top military and intelligence commanders prepared at a five-hour meeting chaired by Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai the previous day.

The commanders deemed Israel's "margin for manoeuvre very narrow" but judged "a unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon impossible."

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and several other key ministers including Kahalani have been arguing for a unilateral withdrawal in stages.

Mordechai and the defence establishment have firmly opposed the proposal, according to Israel Radio.

The security cabinet meeting was held up for more than an hour while Netanyahu discussed the crisis with U.S. Ambassador Edward Walker, officials said.

Netanyahu told his ministers of a "U.S. pledge to try to mediate with Syria," the main power broker in Lebanon and a key backer of both Hizbollah and Amal, the two Shiite groups responsible for the vast majority of attacks in south Lebanon against the Israeli occupation forces.

Netanyahu visited the Israel-Lebanon border just prior to the meeting and reaffirmed his opposition to a unilateral withdrawal.

He vowed to step up reprisals against the Islamist guerrilla movement Hizbollah following a deadly string of attacks against Israeli troops.

"As long as we cannot withdraw from Lebanon in a way that will secure the inhabitants in the north of Israel, we will stay," he said.

"Today we must do everything we can to protect our soldiers and increase attacks on Hizbollah," Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu ordered a reassessment of government policy in Lebanon following a rash of Hizbollah attacks which left seven Israeli soldiers dead in less than two weeks in south Lebanon.



Israeli women protest outside Benjamin Netanyahu's office on Sunday calling for Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon. Israeli cabinet ministers called Sunday for military strikes against Beirut's power and water supplies in retaliation for the killing of Israeli soldiers by resistance fighters in south Lebanon (AP photo)

The prime minister cut short a visit to Europe on Friday to arrange the meeting of the security cabinet which groups 11 members of his 17-minister cabinet.

Sharon has proposed pulling the troops out of the 15-kilometre wide Israeli occupied security zone in stages coupled with a clear warning to Lebanon and Syria that subsequent cross-border attacks would meet with harsh retaliation against both military and civilian targets.

Israel Radio said the military establishment firmly opposed any unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, saying the army's cross-border presence was needed to prevent attacks on towns inside northern Israel.

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Tarawneh stresses government's determination to fight corruption

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh has underlined his government's determination to fight corruption, stressing the law will be applied on all people in a just manner.

The media and the Lower House of Parliament have a role to play in exposing corruption and providing evidence about corruption cases, said the prime minister, who noted that "no one is above the law" and "the judiciary has the final say."

Speaking in an interview with Orbit Satellite Television broadcast last Wednesday, the prime minister said that his government, which has been in office for only three months, has referred to courts numerous cases of corruption linked to both private and public sector employees.

"Under Jordanian law, a citizen cannot assume a public office and continue to do (private) business," said Tarawneh, adding that persons violating the country's laws will be held accountable for their actions.

Referring to unemployment, the prime minister said that the government is exerting intensified efforts to organise the local labour market in implementation of Royal directives contained in the Letter of Designation to the government which he said focused attention on poverty and unemployment. He said he believed unemployment now stands at 16 per cent of the Jordanian workforce.

The prime minister pointed out that most foreign residents of the Kingdom are working illegally, while those holding valid work permits do not exceed six per cent of the total number of guest workers. "That means only 50,000 have valid work permits out of a total of an estimated 750,000 non-Jordanian workers, many of whom are themselves unemployed."

In reply to a question on statements by Israeli officials claiming that Jordan serves as a substitute homeland for the Palestinians, the prime minister said that such statements were made

before the conclusion of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty in 1994. Israeli officials' stands, he said, have changed after the peace treaty and the conclusion of the Oslo accords with the Palestinians.

Tarawneh stressed that Jordan does not play a role in the final status negotiations (between the Palestinians and the Israelis) but he said that the Kingdom is concerned with particular issues connected with these negotiations, namely in security and economic fields.

He said Jordan, which hosts the largest number of Palestinian refugees, does not negotiate on behalf of any party in the final status negotiations. He added that a large number of Palestinian refugees are now Jordanian citizens and have equal rights and duties like other Jordanians, but added that these refugees also have their rights as refugees, and they deserve compensation for their lost lands and have the right to return.

Hariri rejects prime ministry offer

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanon's outgoing prime minister, Rafik Hariri, has turned down an informal offer by President Emile Lahoud to head the country's new government, a source close to Hariri said on Sunday.

On Friday, President Lahoud offered Hariri the post of prime minister on an informal basis and Hariri has already rejected it. If President Lahoud officially announces that Hariri is his candidate for the prime ministry, then Hariri will "formally refuse," the source said.

Hariri, who has been Lebanon's prime minister since 1992, was expected to head the new government. The construction tycoon was the driving force in rebuilding Lebanon's economy which was battered by the 1975-1990 civil war.

The source said Hariri had rejected Lahoud's offer because "the consultations [with members of parliament] led to it breaching the constitution."

But Lebanese politicians said Hariri had actually refused the post because Lahoud, who took office on Tuesday, had tried to intervene in the formation of the new government.

Under the 1989 Taif Agreement which ended the 15-year civil war, the president has little power over the composition of the government.

Earlier reports said Hariri, a volatile billionaire who has been prime minister since 1992, told Lahoud he would not form a new government after receiving support from only 81 of parliament's 128 MPs to continue in the post.

Thirty-one deputies opted instead to leave the naming of the prime minister — in fact a far more politically powerful position than that of the president himself — to Lahoud.

But when Lahoud offered to put those votes at Hariri's disposal, the prime minister gruffly declined, telling the new president to "give them to someone else."

Hariri's refusal was in effect

a challenge to the already extremely limited constitutional powers of the president.

By declining the votes, Hariri questioned whether the president, who occupies largely a figurehead role in Lebanese politics, had even the power to transfer his own political support to the prime minister of his choice.

The standoff has "provoked a difference of opinion on the constitution," Information Minister Bassem Sabeh said.

Parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri should "resolve the problem of designating the prime minister," Sabeh told reporters.

The Daily Star newspaper reported Saturday that Hariri would not have received the support of even half of Lebanese MPs without the help of Berri, a fierce political rival.

Hariri has temporarily resigned several times since being named prime minister in 1992 by his close ally and Lahoud's predecessor, Elias Hrawi.

U.N. inspectors put Iraqi cooperation to real test

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. arms inspectors have started a real test of Iraq's cooperation but are likely to seek access to "sensitive" sites before giving any go-ahead for a sanctions review, diplomats said Sunday.

An exchange of letters over disputed weapons documents between Baghdad and the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling Iraq, meanwhile, appeared to have toned down.

"The inspectors have been to at least two sites never visited before, industrial sites," said a senior diplomatic source. "So far, the cooperation with inspectors is going well" since UNSCOM resumed work on Nov. 18.

"But there have been no visits to 'sensitive' sites," such as the defence ministry, he admitted, adding that there are special procedures for such inspections that could spark trouble.

UNSCOM chief Richard Butler said on Nov. 24 that he would report in two to three weeks if Iraq was sticking to a pledge of renewed cooperation that narrowly averted

U.S.-British air strikes.

The Security Council will then decide on the "comprehensive review," if Iraq passes the test, "and that's when problems will arise" that could lead to a fresh crisis early next year, warned another diplomat. The diplomats said Iraq was eager not to allow obstacles to a review, on which it has pinned hopes for steps towards lifting the oil embargo in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"For Iraq, looking for a light at the end of the tunnel," the review itself is the test," said the senior envoy, referring to Baghdad's campaign to end the eight-year-old sanctions. He said Baghdad was hoping for a progressive closure of the different weapons files, especially nuclear, and a transition to long-term monitoring rather than inspections.

The Security Council is divided on the issue of a gradual closure of arms files between the hardliners, United States and Britain, and China, France and Russia, which are more sympathetic to Iraq.

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Palestinian police bar Israelis from building homes for settlers

GAZA (R) — Palestinian police barred Israeli trucks on Sunday from taking construction materials to a site in the Gaza Strip in a fresh row over the expansion of Jewish settlements.

In a further sign of tension, a West Bank meeting of negotiators to set the course of future peace talks ended in an exchange of accusations over the release of Israeli-held Palestinian prisoners.

Brigadier-General Saeb Al Azzeh, Palestinian commander of national security in the Gaza Strip, said Israeli trucks would violate peace agreements with the Palestinian Authority (PNA) by building more housing.

"We have prevented Israeli trucks from carrying construction materials to the settlement in order to add new housing

units," Israeli authorities, calling the Palestinian action "too much," responded by barring Palestinian VIPs in Gaza from using a special passage to Israel.

"They will have to go through the workers' passage now," said Shlomo Drot, spokesman for Israel's coordinator in the West Bank and Gaza. "We will have to sit down with the Palestinian Authority in order to find a solution for the problem." The VIPs refused to use the workers' passage.

Palestinians view Jewish settlement expansion in the settlement expansion in the Gaza Strip as a violation of peace as a violation of peace as a violation of peace.

Israel, which controls the crossings into the Strip, insists nothing in the accords prevents it from expanding settlements.

Gaza settler leader Aharon Tsor said: "I know one thing. We are citizens of the state of Israel. Based on every law we can expand our homes." He appealed to Israel's government and army to ensure that trucks may pass.

Drot said it was not the first time the PNA had stopped trucks or even arrested drivers. He said Israel had expanded settlements to accommodate natural growth since a 1993 breakthrough deal with the Palestinians.

The Palestinian Legislative Council called for an emergency session on Monday to discuss Jewish settlement activities.

The fate of Jewish settlements is due to be resolved along with other burning issues in negotiations on a final peace deal.

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Qashash convicted of premeditated murder of 11 family members, friend, gets death sentence

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court on Monday sentenced two people to death, including 19-year-old Sa'ed Qashash who was convicted of the gruesome murder of 11 of his family members and a friend in June.

Awad Mustafa, the second to receive the death sentence, was found guilty of murdering Ali Rashdan in April.

As presiding Judge Mohammad Ajameh read the first verdict of guilty of 12 counts of premeditated murder, Qashash listened passively.

"The court does not see any

reason to agree to the attorney's request for mercy because of the heinous murders Qashash committed," Judge Ajameh said.

Court-appointed lawyer Ali Talafih told the Jordan Times following the verdict that he was planning to appeal.

Qashash reportedly confessed to authorities to murdering his father, mother, other family members and a childhood friend on June 10, because they harassed him about his academic performance.

The murder victims included his mother Thuraia, 50, his father Amin, 57, his sisters Kariman, 25, Mirvat, 17,

Wafa, 9 and Insaf, 27, and her husband Jamal Turk, 30, and their two children, Halah, 2, and Zaid, 3, as well as his brothers Mohammad, 30, and Mustafa, 17, and Qashash's schoolfriend Ata Shaalan, 19.

In October, Qashash retracted his previous confessions made on June 11, one day after the discovery of the bodies, and claimed in court that four other people were the actual killers.

He testified in court then that the four were searching for computer diskettes which belonged to his older brother and that when he tried to prevent them from using his gun, they overpowered him.

drugged him then shot and killed his entire family.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the defendant, who had already failed his tawjihi examinations once, allegedly lured the victims one after the other to the basement of the family's house, shot each of them while they had their backs to him, then piled their bodies and sealed the basement's doors with bricks and cement.

In the second case, the same tribunal sentenced 31-year-old Mustafa to death after convicting him of the premeditated murder of a fellow employee at the Ramtha Customs Department in April

1998.

According to court transcripts, the defendant, who worked as a guard at the Customs Department, fought with the victim, over searching one of the vehicles on April 1.

"The defendant decided to take revenge on Rashdan, and on the morning of the incident, took his gun, entered the victim's office and killed him," the court said.

Both verdicts, handed down by the court tribunal which also included judges Miftih Muheidin and Issa Hamdan, will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.

AMMAN (AFP) — Saddam Hussein's half-brother Barzan Al Takriti arrived here from Switzerland Sunday denying any rift with the Iraqi leader and insisting he planned to travel on to Iraq.

Barzan, who served until recently as Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, described reports that he had sought political asylum in Switzerland as "media exaggeration."

Visibly annoyed by questions as to whether he had had financial disagreements with the president's family, Barzan said: "We are not a company to have financial disagreements."

He refused to say when he would be returning to Baghdad, telling journalists: "I am going back to Iraq, what business of yours is the date?"

Barzan, who had been recalled to Baghdad along with 17 other ambassadors as part of a diplomatic reshuffle, told a Saudi newspaper he wanted to stay in Switzerland for family reasons, sparking rumours of his defection which the Iraqi mission in Geneva firmly denied.

Barzan arrived here still wearing a black tie out of respect for his late wife Ahlam Khairallah Tulfah who died of cancer in Switzerland earlier this month.

In a recent newspaper interview he insisted that Saddam knew about his decision to remain in Switzerland "because he understood that it was due to family reasons."

Informed sources in Baghdad had said previously that Barzan, who took up his post in Geneva in early 1989, had strained relations with Saddam's eldest son, Uday, his former son-in-law, and had not returned to Iraq since 1990 in fear of his life.

Barzan's daughter Saja took refuge with her father in Geneva shortly after her marriage to Uday, alleging he maltreated her.

Uday, who later divorced her, reportedly never forgave his father-in-law.

Six of Barzan's eight children have stayed in Switzerland to continue their studies. Barzan said he had been told by the Swiss authorities



Barzan Takriti, Saddam Hussein's half-brother, upon his arrival at Amman International Airport on Sunday (Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

that he could return to see them.

In August 1995, sources from Barzan's entourage said he had defected, following in the footsteps of Saddam's son-in-law, General Hussein Kamel Hassan, who fled to Amman that month, although Barzan himself denied this.

Hussein Kamel, a former minister of military industrialisation, stayed just seven months in Amman before returning home to Iraq on Feb. 20, 1996 — a decision which proved suicidal.

Saddam's mother had a second marriage to his paternal uncle, and the Iraqi president has three half-brothers from the remarriage, Barzan, Waban and Sabawi. A fourth half-brother, Dham, died in the 1980s.

Israeli defence ministry takes delivery of first Arrow missile

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's defence ministry took delivery on Sunday of its first Arrow anti-missile missile, an Israeli-produced weapon jointly funded by the United States, an official statement said.

The 10-year-old project, originally linked with Washington's now defunct Star Wars programme, is supposed to protect Israel against missile attacks from Syria, Iraq and Iran.

"The Arrow delivered today has full operational

capabilities but includes testing devices," the defence ministry said after state-owned Israel Aircraft Industries, the main contractor, handed over the missile at a ceremony.

It said the missile and several others in the same initial series would be used mainly in interception tests "but they can also be used as operational missiles if necessary."

Israel Aircraft Industries test launched an Arrow at a computer-generated target

two months ago, announcing later that the project's three main systems — the missile, the tracking radar and the fire control mechanism — had performed well.

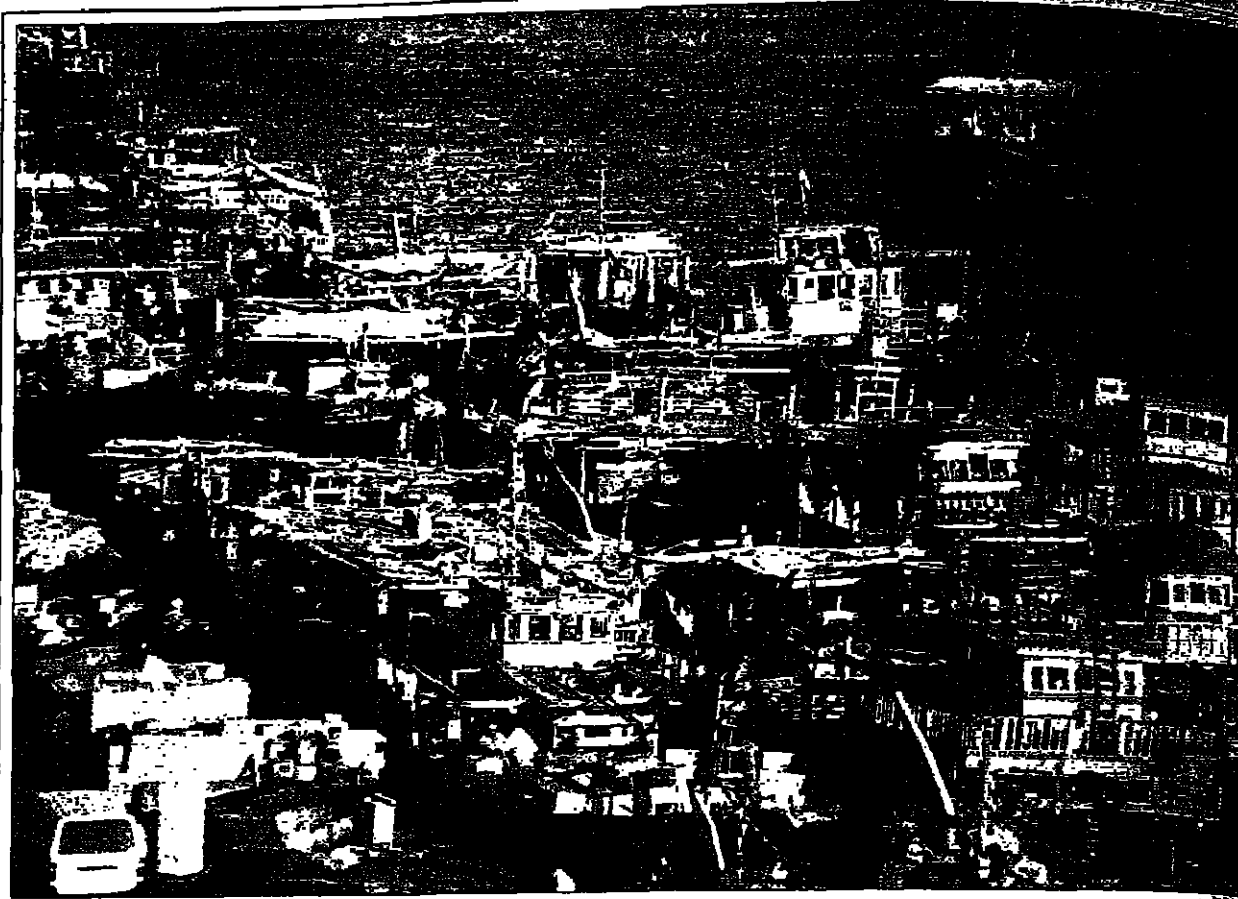
Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, who attended the delivery ceremony, said the Arrow would provide "an almost complete shield against the present and future [missile] threat."

The Arrow is supposed to intercept missiles between 10 and 40 km above the

ground.

But Joe Butler, who manages technical aspects of the project for the United States, said in September there was no guarantee the Arrow missile killer would provide complete protection from ballistic missiles.

Butler, who has estimated the cost of the project as nearly double the official \$1.6 billion projection, said the Arrow would be operational by the end of the year if future tests were successful.



DHOWS IN DUBAI: A dhow Sunday crosses the water to join a group of the other cargo dhows waiting at the Dubai creek before their journey to different re-export destinations in Asia (AP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Aid 'used to house Arafat elite'

LONDON (AFP) — British aid earmarked for housing projects for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank has been used by the European Union for luxury flats for supporters of Yasser Arafat, The Sunday Times has reported. The paper said a general, a police chief and "other acolytes" of the Palestinian leader had benefited from the £2 million (\$3.3 million) from Britain plus £10 million (\$17 million) given by other EU members. The Sunday Times said the money had been intended for cheap housing for poor and overcrowded areas. It quoted an unnamed EU auditor as saying the money had been spent "without any economic controls and is not recoverable."

German aide hints at prisoner swap with Iran

BERLIN (AP) — Germany could swap prisoners convicted of an Iranian-ordered murder in Berlin for a German sentenced to death in Iran, a German official was quoted Sunday as saying. Germany will not be blackmailed, but it could order the release of four men held for the 1992 assassination of Kurdish Iranian dissidents "for overriding state interests," said the Foreign Ministry's human rights commissioner, told the newspaper Der Tagesspiegel. Iran has suggested in return it could waive the death sentence of German businessman Helmut Hofer, 56, convicted by a Tehran court of having sex with an Iranian woman. "I don't consider political presents appropriate," Poppe said. "We simply must find a compromise satisfactory for all involved."

Iran urges Taliban to punish envoys' killers

DUBAI (R) — Iran warned Afghanistan's dominant Taliban militia on Sunday it would have to face the consequences if it did not arrest and punish the killers of Iranian diplomats. "The Taliban should meet other Iranian demands which seeks the identification and punishment of those responsible for the murder of the Iranian diplomats and journalists," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi said. "The Taliban should realise that they have to be accountable regarding their violation of international regulations, otherwise they should face its consequences," he added, but did not elaborate.

Four Yemenis killed by mine

SANAA (AFP) — Four family members were killed and a fifth was critically wounded when their car drove over a mine in Yemen, police said Saturday. "The mine exploded as a car carrying a family drove over it, killing three men and a woman, police in the Lahj province in southern Yemen said. A fifth person in the vehicle, also a relative, remains in critical condition. Some 58,000 mines were planted in southern Yemen, particularly around the port city of Aden, during the three-month 1994 civil war. Roughly 35,000 of them were cleared away, according to official estimates, during an extensive demining programme carried out after the conflict.

Libya protests at Paris summit snub

TUNIS (R) — Libya expressed "surprise" on Sunday at not being invited to a Franco-Arab summit, but said it would have declined anyway. The 50-nation summit, which ended in Paris on Saturday, focused largely on ways to end the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "Libya is surprised at not being invited even though it is an important African state and pays great attention to the African continent's affairs," Libyan state radio, monitored in Tunis, quoted a Libyan foreign ministry source as saying.

'Iraq was ready to fire missiles at Israel from 1989'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq was ready to fire missiles at Israel from 1989 and had selected targets within the Jewish state, an Iraqi military official has revealed in his memoirs.

"The Iraqi army was ready to launch missiles against Israel from May 1989, and military and industrial objectives inside Israel were selected," said General Hazem Abdul Razzak Shihab Al Ayubi, who was in charge of Iraq's missile units during the 1991 Gulf war.

"President Saddam Hussein ordered the defence minister at the time, General Adnan Khairallah, to select targets in case of an Israeli attack against Iraq's military and industrial installations," General

Ayubi said.

His memoirs, entitled "43 Missiles on the Zionist Entity," were obtained by AFP on Sunday.

Ayubi added that during the Gulf war, Iraq fired 43 missiles against Israel and 50 missiles against foreign troops "in Arab territory," in reference to Saudi Arabia, who allowed the multinational force that ejected Iraq from Kuwait to use its territory.

He said the targets in Israel were chosen on the basis of intelligence gathered from "different sources and Palestinian friends."

One person was killed in the Scud attacks in the Tel Aviv area during the Gulf war and hundreds were injured.

Iranian dissident reported missing for weeks, possibly 'executed'

TEHRAN (AP) — A political activist critical of the Iranian government has been missing for weeks and anonymous callers to his family have said he has been "executed," a group of Iran's top dissidents said Sunday.

Prooz Davani, leader of a small group called the United Left, "has been missing for weeks, and the security and intelligence services have flatly told his family that they never arrested him," said a statement signed by 79 of Iran's top dissidents.

There was no immediate comment from the government about the statement. It

comes amid a power struggle between Iran's moderate president, Mohammad Khatami, and hard-line clerics backed by street thugs who often have taken the law into their own hands.

The dissidents' statement on Davani, faxed to The Associated Press in Tehran, follows the murder last week of another leading dissident, Dariush Foruhar.

According to the statement, Davani's mother died of a heart attack after receiving repeated anonymous phone calls saying her son had been arrested and executed.

"It has not been determined

which institution, individual or individuals captured Mr. Davani, where he was executed, or what happened to him," the statement said.

The dissidents called on Khatami, who has promised more political freedoms since his election last year, to order an investigation into Davani's disappearance.

Khatami has demanded the killers of Foruhar, who was stabbed to death last week at his Tehran home along with his wife, be brought to justice. Iranian newspapers have reported several arrests in connection with those murders.

The Foruhar killings coincided with the death of Maj. Sharif, a writer for the dissident publication Iran-e-Faravani. His death is still under investigation, but his family and newspapers both have said he may have died of a heart attack.

In a letter sent to Khatami after the Foruhars' murder, New York-based Human Rights Watch said it was "deeply concerned" that the murders of the Foruhars may be part of a pattern of government-condoned repression directed against critics in which goes back many years.

Lawyer files suit against Mubarak seeking expulsion of Saudi prince

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian lawyer on Sunday filed a lawsuit against President Hosni Mubarak and two ministers demanding the immediate expulsion of a brother of Saudi King Fahd for mistreating his domestic staff.

Tareq Al Awadi demanded in the petition presented to the Cairo administrative court "the immediate expulsion of the prince [Emir Turki Ben Abdul Aziz], his wife — Princess Hind Al Fassi — and their non-Egyptian henchmen," court officials said.

Two Egyptian staff of Emir Turki were injured 12 days ago, one of them seriously, after lowering themselves out of a 29th floor window on knotted sheets to escape his service.

Ahmad Abdul Sattar, a cook, broke his back and waiter Ahmad Nouredin Ahmad suffered multiple injuries when, after lowering themselves down three floors, they dropped on to a balcony on the 24th storey.

The two Egyptians told police that Emir Turki had not paid them once in

the five months they had been in his service and accused his bodyguards of beating them up and turning his Cairo residence in the top five floors of the skyscraper hotel into a virtual prison.

They later told police that nine other servants were still locked up in the suite and had also not been paid for months and had been physically abused by the prince's bodyguards.

Awadi said such action was "unacceptable" and complained that "the reputation of millions of Egyptians have been sullied by this."

"I am deeply disappointed by the Egyptian authorities for not having expelled the prince," the lawyer said. Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzouri and Interior Minister Habib Al Adli were also named in the lawsuit.

Last week 30 deputies demanded an official explanation from the government on how the prince could act without impunity.

Another lawyer, Nabih Al Wahsh, also filed a legal complaint against

Ganzouri over the incident.

Prince Turki meanwhile published a two-page defence of his character in the opposition Al Arabi and Al Shaab newspapers on Sunday, including pictures showing the nine servants sharing jokes and laughing.

The servants are quoted as praising the "generosity" of the prince and his wife, who are said to give "gifts worth \$50" each month to their employees.

Last week Prince Turki pledged to free all nine servants within a week, as soon as he had found new staff.

It is not the first time that Prince Turki has had a run-in with the Egyptian authorities.

In November 1995, two of the emir's bodyguards — an American and a Frenchman — were deported from Egypt after they badly beat up two Egyptians.

The emir only handed over the bodyguards after a prolonged siege of the Cairo hotel where he was staying.

Sudan's parliament speaker reportedly decides to resign

KHARTOUM (AP) — The most influential person in Sudan's government, Parliamentary Speaker Hassan Turabi, appeared to have decided to resign Saturday.

Deputy Speaker Ellison Magaia was quoted by the official Egyptian news agency MENA as saying that Turabi would resign in order to devote his time to the National Congress, which is effectively the ruling party.

"Turabi will continue heading the assembly until it approves next year's budget on Dec. 17," MENA quoted Magaia as saying after a meeting of leading legislators Saturday.

Earlier in the day, the president's legal adviser, Abdul Basit Sabdarat, announced that

his chief would not "intervene in the selection" of a new speaker, the official news agency SUNA reported.

Sabdarat did not say whether Turabi was leaving, but an announcement set the stage for such a resignation.

The government newspaper Al Anbaa had reported Tuesday that Turabi would be resigning as speaker.

Al Anbaa said Turabi would announce his resignation before a new law that legalises "political associations" takes effect on Jan. 1. Political parties have been banned since the military seized power in 1989.

Turabi has not responded to the reports, but earlier this year he expressed a desire to leave parliament.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Batman
15:30 David Copper Field
16:00 Neighbours
16:30 Des Chiffres Et Des Lettres
17:00 Thalassa
18:15 Drama — Wind at My Back
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Parenthood
20:00 The Internet Cafe
20:30 Drama — Big Sky
21:30 Encounter
22:00 News in English
22:30 Drama — The Fix
23:30 Comedy — Keeping Up Appearances
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:51 Fajr
06:12 (Sunrise) Duha
11:24 Dhuhr
14:13 'Asr
16:36 Maghreb
17:58 'Isha

CHURCHES

Mary of Nazareth Church
Tel. 5930740
Applies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688403
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifich Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to dip slightly, skies partly cloudy.

winds westerly moderate, with a chance of scattered showers in the northern regions. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.
Amman 11/21
Aqaba 17/26
Deserts 10/23
Jordan Valley 16/26

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 25 Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 33 per cent. Aqaba 56 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 09/18
Jerash 11/21
Um Qays 10/20
Madaba 10/21
Petra 09/23
Dead Sea 17/27

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 4885446
Dr. Arafat Al Ashbah 5602507
Dr. Asman Al Mubtaseh 4875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah 5347351

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Al Salih 021246658
Fou'ad Pharmacy 021275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Yousef Abu Sa'ad 091989000
Palestine Pharmacy 091983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4771111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

HOSPITALS

Jordan Televisi 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic. Abdi 5666137
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khaldi Maternity 4642816
Akileh Maternity 4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667277
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771013
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

Al Hikma Modern Hospital 091990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)727555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)727275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital (02)7102831, (02)7102011
Speciality Hospital (02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)201411

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:45 Sanaa (RJ)
08:30 Damascus (RJ)

Other Flights
08:20 Alexandria (BA)
09:30 Cairo (MS)
10:00 Khartoum (SD)
13:20 Bahrain (GF)
14:45 Doha (QR)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
15:25 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50 Istanbul (SD)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:15 Frankfurt (LH)
22:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)
01:25 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30 Beirut (RJ)
08:30 Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
22:00 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
22:00 Tehran (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
06:00 Istanbul (TK)
07:25 Paris (AF)
09:05 London (BA)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
11:05 Istanbul (SD)
11:40 Bahrain (GF)
15:30 Vienna (OS)
15:35 Doha (QR)
16:30 Dubai (EK)
18:50 Khartoum (SD)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
23:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
02:45 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

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Paintings by Ali Najjar, a Jordanian artist, will be on display at the Jordanian National Museum, until Dec. 14.

Christmas Charity Bazaar
Annual Christmas charity bazaar, sponsored by the Jordanian Women's Union, will be held at the Marriott Hotel, until Dec. 14. Tel. 56996341.

Home

PRESENTS STAN
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leaders. Attending the e
Minister Favez Tarawi
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Princess Ra
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Her
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and Prince Edward
attended a cere
Sunday held by the
Council marking
anniversary in Jor

WHAT'S
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ON

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National Music Conserva
at 6:00 p.m.
"Bob le flambeur" at the
National Centre, Jabal
at 6:30 p.m. and
at 8:30 p.m. (Tel.
56996341)

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Kathryn Magness at
the National Centre on the Mar
at 8:00 p.m. (Tel.
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REGENT PRESENTS STANDARDS: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, hands a standard to a member of the Badia Unit Brigades during a ceremony in which he discussed several domestic issues with tribal leaders. Attending the event were HRH Prince Ghazi, His Majesty King Hussein's advisor for tribal affairs, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Kaabneh, and other senior military and civil officials (Photo by Boghos)

Princess Rahma, Prince Edward attend British Council 50th anniversary ceremony

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Royal Highness Princess Rahma and Prince Edward of Britain attended a ceremony Sunday held by the British Council marking its 50th anniversary in Jordan.

At the ceremony, Prince Edward opened an exhibition of original works by 17 famous British painters who visited the Holy Land during the 19th century, as well as a small collection of original photographs of

the Holy Land from the previous century.

Prince Edward also inaugurated an extension to the council's new Language Institute, which serves 5,500 Jordanians annually.

Princess Rahma, who stood in for Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and Princess Sarvath, toured the council's departments along with Prince Edward and examined the services they offer to the public.

Also Sunday, Prince Edward and Princess Rahma visited Salt, where they inspected the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, a local Anglican church and the city's old English hospital.

They were welcomed by Salem Juneidi, deputy governor of Balqa, the mayor of Salt, Bishop Rabah Abul Asal of the Arab-Anglican Community and other dignitaries.

In a briefing, the bishop

outlined the institute's services to local communities and the special education and vocational training courses it offers to handicapped children.

The Prince and Princess toured the different sections of the institute, which was established in 1964.

The institute currently offers vocational training services to 150 Jordanian students.

'Decision on sending IPC case to prosecutor expected next week'

Government committees' investigations into deal incomplete — Mulki

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The government will decide by next week whether or not to send the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipelines file to the prosecutor general pending the outcome of investigations into their partial sale. Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki said Sunday.

"We are expecting a final report by the two government-appointed committees on the IPC case early next week," Mulki told the Jordan Times.

He said the government had appointed an administrative committee which is now preparing its report, while a technical committee is expected to conclude its work on Tuesday.

However, the Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm quoted Minister of Justice Jawdat Sbouh on Sunday as saying that the government had decided to send the IPC file to the prosecutor general.

Sbouh, who was unavailable for further comment, was quoted by the daily as saying, "The government decided to submit the IPC file to the prosecutor general to conduct a legal investigation."

But Mulki, who has been authorised by the government to follow up on the IPC pipelines case, insisted that the committees have not finished their work.

"The heads of the two assessment committees will meet with representatives of the Audit Bureau at the end of this week in order to come up with a combined report, which will be discussed during the Cabinet meeting next week," according to Mulki.

"I expect to submit the final report about the IPC pipelines case to the government during Tuesday's ordinary Cabinet meeting," said Mulki. "After that, the government will decide whether there is a case that needs to

be sent to the prosecutor general or not."

The government and the House Energy and Agriculture Committee, agreed last Tuesday to wait for the completion of the investigation into the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipelines case after halting a JD250,000 deal for the sale of part of the pipelines.

The government decided on Nov. 21 to halt all procedures related to the sale pending the completion of investigations into the legality of the bid and studies of possible uses of the pipelines.

The government also stopped the removal of any parts of the pipelines and decided to store all pipelines already removed at the Aqaba Region Authority pending the completion of the investigation.

Mulki sent a legal memorandum on Nov. 22 to Akram Amin Abu Amr, who won the bid on July 20,

1998, telling him to stop work immediately as he was violating the deal by taking parts of another pipeline that were not included in the official bid.

But Abu Amr himself claimed in a letter sent to the head of the Water Authority, dated Aug. 10, that several pipeline components listed in the official bid were not found due to the fact that no maps were available.

The pipeline, linking Iraq's northern city of Kirkuk with the Mediterranean city of Haifa via Jordan, was totally shut down after the 1948 war that led to Israel's creation.

It was initially built by a British company in the early 1930s for the Iraqi Petroleum Company.

In a minor Jordanian-Iraqi border demarcation in the early 1980s, Amman was eventually given additional parts of the pipeline which passed through the new areas.

Regional conference focuses on air transport safety, personnel training

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — A five-day regional conference started yesterday with participants focusing on air transport safety in the region as well as the need for proper training of civil aviation personnel.

"To ensure success, you need to consider the capability of both human resources and institutions dealing with a demanding air transport industry. More than ever, training must respond to real needs, and more than ever, your institutions must focus on efficiency and economy," HRH Prince Faisal told participants in his address to the Fifth Meeting of the Middle East Navigation Planning and Implementation Regional Group.

Participants in his address to the Fifth Meeting of the Middle East Navigation Planning and Implementation Regional Group.

Ahmad Zalhouri, director of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, Middle East Regional Office, later added that cultural diversity among countries' experiences in the same field differ and hence each and every culture has to be recognised and accommodated through open dialogue and consultation.

"My point here is simple: training for planners and operations personnel must take into account national

cultures. It would be a grievous mistake to think that simply importing a programme that worked in one cultural environment to another will bring the same benefit."

According to Captain Jasser Ziyad, director general of the Jordanian Civil Aviation Authority, recognising sources of funding for training is imperative.

"It is important to identify the funding sources and resources to train people who will operate the new sophisticated [air navigation] equipment."

Prince Faisal stressed the importance of globalisation in further developing safety

in the civil aviation industry.

"The establishment of future global air operations will greatly benefit both air-space users and service providers as new technology systems promise to provide better and more efficient services. Ultimately, it must be people who will benefit most from safer and more efficient air transportation," he said.

Participants at the conference elected Raja'i Rifa'i of the Civil Aviation Authority as the chairman of the Middle East Regional Group for the next term.

Delegates from 16 Arab and foreign countries are participating in the conference.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

* German film "Die Winterreise" (The Winter Trip) — (with subtitles in English) at the National Music Conservatory at 6:00 p.m.

* "Bob le flambeur" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabbal Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

* "While You Were Sleeping" at the Books@Café, Jabbal Amman on Tuesday Dec. 1 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 450457).

CONCERTS

* A special concert by the Gershwin duo of John Ferguson on piano and soprano singer Kathryn Magistro at Al Waha ballroom at the Marriott Hotel at 8:00 p.m. (The concert marks the centennial of the American composer George Gershwin).

* Musical performance by Pilar Jurado (soprano coloratura) with the participation of Manuel Rodriguez and Julio Muñoz (piano) at Terra Santa Cultural Centre on Tuesday Dec. 1 at 8:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS CHARITY BAZAAR

* Annual Christmas charity bazaar, sponsored by the American Women of Amman, at the Marriott Hotel on Friday Dec. 4, 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Tel. 5699634).

EXHIBITIONS

* Oil paintings by Ali Najjar at Instituto Cervantes, Jabbal Amman, until Dec. 14.

* The Tenth Anniversary exhibition of Contemporary Art by Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabbal Weibdeh (Tel. 4632512), until Jan. 28.

* Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Baladina Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 31.

* Display of Jordan River Foundation (JRF) 1998 autumn/winter collection entitled "Falling Leaves" at the JRF showroom, Jabbal Amman (Tel. 4613081), until Nov. 30.

Opposition announces plans to sue government for banning pro-Iraq rally

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — A coalition of opposition parties Sunday said it plans to sue the government for banning them from holding a rally in support of Iraq.

Coalition spokesperson Salem Nahhas also vowed that the 13-party bloc would forge ahead with plans to hold the rally but would not seek government permission beforehand.

"We will file a case at the Higher Court of Justice because the government banned our planned open-air rally," Nahhas, also secretary general of the leftist Hashd party, told a press conference.

Government officials were not immediately available for comment.

Nahhas said the coalition postponed Friday's march from Al Hussein Mosque in downtown Amman to the nearby Hashemiyah Square to express solidarity with Iraq in its latest crisis with

the U.N. over arms inspections after the Interior Ministry denied them permission.

"We will choose a place and we will head to it without telling them [the government] in order not to give them a pretext to prevent us," he said.

But he refused to set a date or mention the site of the proposed rally.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi met with political activists at the height of the recent U.N.-Iraq crisis and told them the government would not allow any rallies.

But he reportedly told them that the ministry would consider requests to hold rallies if they were held in closed halls and not on the streets.

However, the government allowed a few dozen women to stage two sit-ins in front of the Iraqi and American embassies in support of Iraq.

Washington backed down on its decision to launch

military strikes against Iraq two weeks ago after Baghdad agreed to resume cooperation with U.N. arms inspectors.

Popular sympathy for ordinary Iraqis remains high in Jordan, but the government, like most countries, wants Iraq to implement all U.N. resolutions if it wants the sanctions lifted.

The government, worried that military strikes against Iraq would trigger domestic protests, had made it clear it would not tolerate threats to internal stability.

Security forces aborted plans to hold a rally in downtown Amman after Friday prayers and briefly detained several activists. In February, one person died in pro-Iraq demonstrations in southern Jordan.

The coalition also planned to send a delegation to Baghdad next week to express their solidarity with the Iraqi people.

RJ refuses to allow ill woman to fly on New York-Amman route

By Munther Murjan

AMMAN — Royal Jordanian on Saturday said it refused to allow an ailing Jordanian woman to fly from New York to Amman on Nov. 20 because of her medical situation.

Ibrahim Abu Issa, a Jordanian living in California, sent an e-mail to the Jordan Times last week complaining that RJ refused to fly his sick mother.

Airlines TransWorld (TWA) had agreed to allow her to use their airline to travel from Los Angeles to New York.

RJ and TWA have a code sharing agreement. "My mother is still in the U.S. and I am still looking for other avenues

to transport her back to Jordan," he said yesterday.

Abu Issa said his mother, who fell ill with a blood clot in her right lung during her stay in the U.S., had a fractured hip and was recovering from breast cancer. "She needed special care during her travel to Jordan... a wheelchair and oxygen," he explained.

"I sent a fax to the RJ office in New York and it was passed to the medical director of RJ, who refused to allow my mother to travel aboard the plane... [he] did not give any reason why she was denied travel."

An airline official told the Jordan Times that the decision not to allow the woman to fly on the New

York-Amman route was taken in line with regulations set by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) after the RJ doctor claimed she was in no condition to travel.

"We do not turn passengers away, as our New York-Amman flight is usually half empty and we are always looking for passengers," said Omar Hammad from RJ's regulations department.

"When the airline's doctor deems that a passenger is not fit for travel by air, we prevent that person from boarding our aircraft to ensure the safety of all," he told the Jordan Times.

The more than 12-hour long New York-Amman flight and varying

degrees of pressure, oxygen and humidity when flying at high altitudes could worsen the situation of any patient with a serious health problem, according to Issam Salameh, RJ assistant vice president for medical services.

"Abu Issa's mother was suffering from a blood clot... Therefore, the doctor's decision to prevent her from flying was correct, because if she had flown and her condition worsened, the airline would have had to re-route or lose her in the air," he said.

"And in both cases, we would run the risk of being sued by other passengers for delays incurred or by the family of the patient for failing

to provide adequate medical airborne services to her," Salameh added.

Salameh said it was not feasible to provide each plane with a complete medical staff and equipment.

Both RJ officials said there were several solutions for passengers whose health condition is critical.

Either they can book a stretcher on the plane, whereby the patient uses nine seats in a row and actually pays for three, charter an air ambulance or install a makeshift medical room on board the plane provided the passenger or his family signs a written agreement not to force the airline to re-route in case of a mid-flight emergency.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Basma opens YWCA branch

FUHEIS (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Sunday opened a branch of the Young Women's Christian Association in the town of Fuheis and paid tribute to Jordanian women's social and economic endeavours. Princess Basma, honorary president of the YWCA, noted that the opening of the branch was one of the events marking His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday. She praised Jordanian women's groups in general and the YWCA in particular for promoting the role of women in society, adding that the YWCA has set good examples for others in societal development fields. The Princess, who was presented with the Fuheis town trophy, opened a charity bazaar and inspected items on display, including needlework and embroideries, Arabic rugs and artificial flowers.

Tarawneh congratulates Majali

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh Sunday congratulated Deputy Abdul Hadi Majali on his election as Lower House speaker. In a message, Tarawneh said he was confident that Majali's qualifications and experience would enable him to facilitate cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities in serving the country under the guidance of the Hashemite leadership.

'Jordan-Egypt power link next month'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Egypt will formally inaugurate the linkage of their electric power networks on Dec. 10 during a meeting of the Joint Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee in Amman, a National Electric Power Company official said Sunday. Mohammad Azzam Khamis, head of the NEPCO Planning Department, said the linkage, which entails laying a 400-kilovolt underwater cable connecting Aqaba and Sinai, has so far cost \$228.3 million. Jordan has paid \$80.3 million for the part of the project on its territory. Khamis said the linkage is part of an overall project that will eventually connect the two countries' grids with those of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and later, Europe. Meanwhile, an Egyptian industrial delegation Sunday opened talks at the Ministry of Industry and Trade on bilateral cooperation in industrial fields. The head of the delegation, Mohammad Sibai, said talks covered prospects for cooperation in the shoe manufacturing industry, textiles, ready-made garments and services fields.

Jordan-Algeria tourism agreement signed

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji on Sunday signed a cooperation agreement with his Algerian counterpart Abdul Qader Qarimah to activate tourism between the two countries. A joint committee will be set up to implement the agreement, which stipulates that both sides should exchange experience, information and training courses in the fields of tourism, hotels, antiquities, renovations, traditional crafts and exhibitions. Jordan and Algeria will also encourage and facilitate investment in tourism projects. A Jordanian exhibition will be opened in Algeria in May 1999, while a similar Algerian event will be held in Amman next November, according to Biltaji.

India's Congress hammers BJP in state polls

NEW DELHI (R) — India's Congress party swept to electoral victory in three key states Sunday, raising the prospect of a power struggle with the Hindu nationalist-led central government.

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi said she was in no hurry to oust the coalition government of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which lost control of two bastion states and failed to wrest control of another.

With most of the ballots from last Wednesday's polls in four states counted, Congress had won three-quarters of the assembly seats in Delhi and the western state of Rajasthan and clinched a majority in the central state of Madhya Pradesh.

Although the elections in four states have no direct bearing on the central government, speculation mounted that some of the eight-month-old coalition's partners could lose confidence in the BJP and jump ship.

The BJP's parliamentary leaders began a conclave at 3:30 p.m. (1000 GMT) and were due to meet their allies later.

The Congress Working Committee planned to plot

its next moves later in the day, but Gandhi made it clear that her party would tread carefully.

"... My personal feeling is that we ought not to rush into certain situations. We have to consider the situation properly," she told New Delhi Television. "We don't need to boast about this. I think we have to get down to work now."

Jairam Ramesh, secretary of the Congress economic group, said the polls had brought a "very strong anti-BJP vote" because of the soaring prices of essential commodities.

Anger over prices of staples like onions and potatoes overshadowed last May's nuclear tests, earlier thought to be a powerful political card for the BJP.

Ramesh told a World Economic Forum luncheon meeting that Congress was in no position to form an alternative government from the fragmented ranks of the lower house of parliament.

"We don't believe Congress party is now in a position to bring down the government. Our political reading is that we should come to power in a clean manner," Ramesh said.

Congress won 51 of the 69 seats in the 70-member

Delhi assembly for which voting took place, with the BJP at 15. In Rajasthan, it won 150 of the 195 seats and the BJP took just 33.

In Madhya Pradesh, Congress took 163 of 320 seats at stake.

In Mizoram, the fourth state where elections were held last Wednesday, the Congress lost to two regional parties. But the state is not considered crucial in national politics.

Parliament's winter session opens Monday and the Congress is getting strong signals from the Communists, who also bitterly oppose the Hindu nationalist BJP, for a coordinated move to turn the heat up on the fragile coalition.

Home (interior) Minister Lal Krishna Advani told reporters in the southern city of Madras that voters had voted against the state governments, not the centre.

"The verdict is certainly a matter which needs introspection and corrective action," he said. "The BJP government at the centre has performed well but because of various factors, the exorbitant rise in prices of essential commodities, it has affected the mood of the people."



Garlanded Sonia Gandhi, president of India's main opposition Congress party, stands with supporters at her residence in New Delhi. The Congress party, eyeing a political comeback, swept to power in two key states and held on to its reins in another in the assembly elections held last week in four states (Reuters photo)

Feeding Third World cities alarms United Nations

ROME (AFP) — The inexorable spread of cities in the developing world is causing severe problems of keeping the population fed, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) says in its latest annual report.

For example, Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, has 1,300 new mouths to fill every day, the United Nations body says, adding that those who flood to the cities in search for a better life do not often find it.

By 2005 the world's urban population will have exceeded those living in rural areas, and in the next 20 years 93 per cent of that population's growth will be in the Third World.

In 2000, the world will have 20 cities of 10 million people or more. Six are on the American continent (New York, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires), two in Africa (Lagos and Cairo), and 12 in Asia (Tokyo, Osaka, Seoul, Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Manila, Dhaka, Calcutta, New Delhi, Karachi and Bombay).

By 2015 there will be half-a-dozen more (Hangzhou, Jakarta, Hyderabad, Lahore, Tehran and Istanbul). Apart from the last, which is half in Europe, all are in Asia.

Such a megalopolis

requires 6,000 tonnes of food a day, the FAO said, involving coordination between producers, transporters, wholesalers and distributors, including retail shops, street sellers and market facilities.

But it warned that while the cities were expanding the infrastructure was not keeping up. With the urban area of developing countries doubling in 10 to 15 years, the result would be an anarchic and illegal construction, shanty towns, overcrowding, corruption, sickness from poor sanitary conditions and inflation due to the increase in middlemen.

According to World Bank estimates, the number of impoverished city dwellers will mushroom from 400 million in 1990 to one billion in 2000.

Such poor households can spend between 60 per cent and 80 per cent of their income just on feeding themselves. This is 30 per cent more than rural families, and their diet is inferior, the FAO said.

Attracted by the hope of a better life in one or two generations, as well as enjoying benefits like running water, sanitation and health services, country dwellers who move to the city can equally well find themselves far from markets, without transport and

eating contaminated food in overcrowded conditions.

While private enterprise and individuals sell and distribute food, municipal authorities tend to provide the roads, warehouses and market facilities.

But much of this infrastructure is badly sited, costly and unfit for its purpose, the FAO said. In Africa, for instance, wholesale markets are often stuck on the edge of towns and lack the basic equipment needed. The result is goods stolen or lost, unhealthy conditions, and no refrigeration.

Grain is often piled up in the open air and losses reach unacceptable levels.

In Asia or Latin America on the other hand city centre markets pollute the environment with their waste, and surrounding roads are blocked by delivery trucks.

Almost everywhere wholesalers form cosy cartels which enable them to charge exorbitant prices, the FAO report said.

It stressed the important role played by small markets and street vendors, which create employment and provide a service to the poorest inhabitants. In Caracas, for instance, produce bought on the street represents 20 to 25 per cent of household expenditure on food.

Zemin wraps up Japan visit overshadowed by war history

SAPPORO, Japan (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin Sunday wrapped up a landmark visit to Japan which was marred by his failure to get a written apology for Tokyo's wartime atrocities.

The Chinese leader spent his last full day in Japan visiting a monument to great Chinese writer Lu Xun in the city of Sendai and meeting with agricultural experts in this snow-covered capital of northern Hokkaido Island.

But his focus on farming and culture to round off his landmark six-day visit was heavily overshadowed by the brutal 1937-45 Japanese aggression in China.

Jiang had been pushing hard for a full, written apology from Japan to mark his trip — the first by a Chinese president since the two Asian powers reestablished diplomatic ties in 1972 — but he received only a verbal apology for Japan's aggression at his Tokyo summit Thursday with Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi.

A written joint declaration issued after the summit mentioned Japan's "deep remorse" but failed to offer a full apology.

In response, Jiang refused to let the dark history go, bringing up the subject at every public event on his schedule.

Japan should "guide the nation and young generations with correct views of history and never allow a repeat of the ideology or force of militarism," he told students at Tokyo's Waseda University

Saturday. At a weekend news conference, he accused "certain people in high positions" in Japan of "distorting history and trying to gloss over the country's past aggression."

China says 20 million people died as a result of the 1937-45 occupation. The 1937 Nanjing massacre alone killed 140,000 people, according to Allied trials of Japanese war criminals.

Japan's extreme rightists, who deny the Nanjing massacre took place, held vocal protests through the trip, although none got past heavy security which was enforced by 10,000 extra Japanese police for the visit.

Ironically, it was left-wing demonstrators who faced off with the Chinese leader, interrupting his university speech with anti-nuclear protests before being dragged off by security guards.

Jiang's other main objective during the visit had been to secure a strong statement on Taiwan, laying out Japan's support for China's policy of no Taiwan independence, no two Chinas (China and Taiwan) and no Taiwan joining international organisations as a sovereign state.

Instead, Beijing merely got a restatement of Japan's promise not to recognise Taiwan as a separate state. China regards the island as a renegade province.

"The Chinese president's visit focused only on the past and the Taiwan issue and failed

to expand discussion on the Asian crisis and international affairs," the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said Sunday.

Japan and China will aim for new relations in the 21st century, leaving various touchy issues untouched," the daily added.

Jiang left the Japanese capital late Saturday and travelled north by train to Sendai to trace Chinese writer Lu Xun's voyage of nearly a century ago.

Lu (1881-1936), one of China's most influential authors and social reformers, came to Japan in 1902 to study medicine at the Sendai Medical School.

Jiang also visited Tohoku university and presented officials with a poem he wrote the night before about Sendai before boarding his Air China Boeing 747 for Sapporo.

Boisterous school children waving Chinese and Japanese flags welcomed him to this sleepy city and Jiang broke from his scheduled agenda to walk over to the youngsters and greet them in Japanese.

He then toured farms in the region and met agriculture experts involved in plans to set up an agricultural science research centre in China which is aimed at boosting grain yield with fewer damaging chemicals and pesticides.

The Chinese president, accompanied by his wife Wang Yeping, returns home Monday after a farewell banquet later Sunday hosted by Sapporo officials.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Congo rebel political chief refuses peace pact

KABALO, DR Congo (AFP) — The political chief of the DRC's rebels, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, has refused a peace agreement reached in Paris among combatants in the conflict. Wamba told AFP that he did not believe in the validity of the verbal agreement among the rebels and Kabila and foreign nations caught up in a power struggle in the DRC. The president of the rebel group, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), on a pact meant to pave the way for full-fledged negotiations next month because the DRC insurgents threaten to "party to it." "We don't think an agreement can be reached without involving us, because otherwise it risks having a problem in implementing the ground," Wamba said. Speaking by satellite from Bunia, in the northeast Orientale province, he said that he hoped the RCD would be consulted in any accord, announced Saturday at the end of an Africa summit also attended by U.N. chief Kofi Annan.

4-year-old boy emerges unscathed in India's train wreck

KHANNA, India (AP) — Police are calling it a miracle that a 4-year-old boy was rescued from the wreckage of a train derailed in northern India, with no injuries on his body even after the coach was crushed like a ball of paper. "It's a miracle. We can call it that," said police officer Randev Singh. Workers found Shubham crying in the tangled mass of the Sealdah Express at this northwestern town in the state of Punjab. The express train slammed into the derailed coaches of the Frontier Mail Thursday. "We heard a voice in the wreckage," Hodal said in an interview Saturday night. Several hours after the accident, workers using acetylene torches carefully cut through the wreckage. They found Shubham crouched under a pile of wooden blocks that had formed a tent over him. His parents, grandparents and two aunts all were dead. The family was returning to New Delhi from a pilgrimage to a Hindu shrine in Jammu, capital of the northern state of Jammu-Kashmir where the accident occurred on a foggy morning. "The boy was crying nonstop. He kept saying, 'Take me to my papa. I want my mother.' How do we tell him that his parents are dead?" Hodal said. Shubham has been in a state of shock and rarely speaks, he said. Police teams found about the family after contacting neighbours in New Delhi. They are now trying to trace relatives. Photographs of the child were shown on national television so that his near relatives could claim him. "We are proceeding very very cautiously. We don't want false claimants," the officer said. The child is in the care of a police officer's family.

Antarctic explorers pass site where Robert Scott died

SYDNEY (AFP) — Three Antarctic adventurers retracing the footsteps of polar explorer Robert Scott, 87 years after his historic and fatal expedition to the South Pole and back, have passed the site where he died. Since leaving Scott Base on Nov. 4, Peter Hillary, Eric Phillips and Jon Muir have covered more than 300 kilometres on foot of their 2,804 kilometre trek. The passed the site of Scott's death Friday, expedition organisers said. It is the first time anyone has followed exactly the route taken by the 1911 expedition. "We think a lot about Scott. We feel very strongly that he and his group were a very committed party," said Hillary, son of Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb Everest. Each of the team is hauling a sled loaded with more than 150 kilograms of food, cooking fuel and equipment. They have left quantities of food and cooking fuel at each of the two depots they have established so far on the pole-ward leg of the journey, to be collected on their return to Scott Base. "We have had to endure temperatures as cold as minus 15 degrees Celsius, a screaming blizzard which forced us into the tent for a day, and sastrugi (snow ridges on the ice) which have made our progress slower than expected," Hillary was quoted as saying by expedition organisers, speaking to reporters in Australia from Scott Base. "But we have had some good days and as we leave we deposit our load lights and we can travel faster." The team have been keeping their spirits up by speaking to their families on the satellite phones they are carrying. They aim to be at the South Pole for Christmas Day, but first have to traverse the crevasse-riddled Shackleton Glacier.

China building longest bridge on Yangtze River

BEIJING (AP) — China is building its longest bridge over its longest river, the Yangtze. The 2.6 billion yuan (\$314 million) bridge under intensive construction in the city of Wuhan, in eastern China's Anhui province, will have a 6-kilometre-long highway section and a 10-kilometre-long train section, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported Sunday. When it goes into operation in 2000, it will shorten the route between Beijing and Xiamen, a special economic zone on the southeastern coast, by 800 kilometres. The government is increasing spending on infrastructure to keep the overall economic growth rate strong. The nation's total investment in the first nine months of this year was 1.1 trillion yuan (\$131 billion), an increase of 20 per cent over the same period in 1997, Xinhua said in a separate report Sunday. Investment in capital construction was 625.8 billion yuan (\$77 billion), up 21 per cent over the first nine months of 1997.

Fleeing a degraded habitat, turtles invade fruit orchards

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — Fleeing stripped forests and chemically tainted rivers, turtles by the tens of thousands have invaded fruit orchards southwest of Bangkok, where they are falling prey to hunters, a newspaper said Sunday. "They hide in the undergrowth and tall grass to escape sunlight during the day-time and come out at night in droves to look for food," one orchard owner, Preecha Pukkabutr, told the Bangkok Post. The 60-year-old Preecha said he had recently found some 50 freshwater turtles of different sizes and species in just one 10-metre-square area of his orchard. "The invasion" started nearly a year ago, but in recent months it has reportedly attracted hunters from other provinces who Preecha said trespassed on the orchards to ferret out the turtles for sale to restaurant owners. He said the hunters, arriving in pick-up trucks, normally came at night, poking into the undergrowth with long bamboo poles. Some also stole fruit from the orchards in Samut Songkram Province, sparking threats by owners that they would be shot. While locals normally don't eat turtles, they are a popular item Bangkok restaurants catering to tourists from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and South Korea who believe turtle meat improves sexual performance. Charuchin Natheephaphas, a reptile expert at the National Science Museum Organisation, recently said the turtle migration indicated there was something terrible afoot in the traditional habitat of these animals. He cited chemical pollution in the Mae Klong River and massive deforestation in areas northwest of Samut Songkram. "Turtles are very sensitive to changes in water quality," he said, adding they were important to riverine ecology, helping to keep the water clean by feeding on dead vegetation. The expert said habitat destruction and hunting had brought some species to the brink of extinction.

Researchers identify 142 million-year-old flowering plant fossil

WASHINGTON (AP) — Researchers believe they have discovered fossil evidence of the world's oldest flower, at 142 million years: a spindly twig with peapod-shaped fruit and a woody stem that looks nothing like a rose, an apple blossom or a daisy.

The fossil is from an early evolutionary stage when plants were just developing the flowering system that later evolved into fruit, grain, brilliantly coloured and fragrant flowers and food for many animals, said David Dilcher, a University of Florida biology professor.

"It would have been a very different world if early flowering plants like this one had not been successful," said Dilcher, co-author of a study

in a recent edition of the journal Science.

"There would have been no apples, no Wheaties in the morning, no corn on the cob, no potatoes, no rice or other grains."

All of the common plant food sources came into existence after plants evolved the ability to make flowers that attracted insects and other pollinators and then grew into fruit.

The flowering plant fossil was found in a rock formation of limestone and volcanic ash layers in China, near the town of Beipiao, about 250 miles northeast of Beijing. The rock beds were once on the bottom of a lake that periodically was showered with volcanic ash, Dilcher said.

Plants and animals that sank to the lake bottom became covered with sediment and turned into fossils.

Villagers digging in the fossil beds have unearthed dinosaurs, insects, birds and plants from millions of years ago, but this is the first time a flowering plant has been uncovered.

The discovery has been age-dated at 142 million years by Chinese scientists. Dilcher said. The oldest previously known flowering plant was about 130 million years old. Chinese researchers, including the researcher who found the fossil, asked Dilcher to analyse it.

The ancient plant lacks the petals and shape that most people associate with flowers.

"It doesn't have any beautiful or showy flowers, but it is a flowering plant because it has fruit that enclose seeds," said Dilcher.

Botanists halted the discovery as an important advance in understanding how plants evolved.

"To the world of botany, it's a discovery of the same scale as understanding the details of why the dinosaurs became extinct," said William L. Crepet, a Cornell University professor.

The plant specimen is about 7.6 centimetres long, with two parts that appear to be joined branches. Along the branches are what appear to be paired leaves. But Dilcher said the whole thing, branches and leaves, is actually a flower.

That is because some of the leaves are closed, like peapods, and contain seeds. The peapods are considered the fruit of the flower, he said.

Indeed, the plant "may have been the first evolutionary experiment in enclosing seeds and trying to attract pollinators," Dilcher said.

Plants first developed seeds some 350 million years ago. Developing flowers and attracting insect pollinators was the next great leap in plant evolution, and eventually in animal evolution, he said.

Plants, in effect, evolved ways to enlist the cooperation of animals to reproduce. They developed ways to attract pollinators, such as bees. They developed ways to have seeds

transported by making fruit, such as apples, that were eaten by animals who then dropped the seeds elsewhere.

"Flowering plants were the first advertisers in the world," said Dilcher. "They managed to gain the cooperation of animals by learning to say 'Hey, I smell good. I've got a reward for you. Come and visit me.'" Plants reached the stage of having bright blossoms, sweet fragrance and flowing nectar about 55 million years ago, some 90 million years after the Chinese flower fossil.

"These changes all came in progressive steps," said Dilcher. "They helped flowering plants become the most successful of all of the plants."



Traditional Indonesian sailing boats called 'pinisi' are moored in Sunda Kelapa in the old Jakarta. The 17-metre-long schooners come from Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Sumatra carrying timber for West Java. Jakarta was first known as Sunda Kelapa, the harbor of the Indo-Javanese Pajajaran kingdom from the 12th century to the 16th century. Ships used to come from neighbouring islands as well as from India, South China and later Portugal and Holland to buy pepper, rice and gold (Reuters photo)

S. Korea advises against cornering North Korea

TOKYO (R) — South Korea believes care must be taken not to corner North Korea in a row with the United States over a suspected underground nuclear facility that threatens peace talks, a senior Japanese official said Sunday.

Briefing reporters about talks Saturday between Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi and South Korean Prime Minister Kim Jong Pil, the official said Seoul feared North Korea could pull out of a nuclear accord with Washington if it was pushed too far.

Under the deal Washington, Seoul and Tokyo agreed to provide the North with two nuclear reactors and alternative energy supplies in return for Pyongyang freezing its nuclear programme.

The official quoted Kim as telling Obuchi "some room must be left open now the North is starting to show signs of change."

Kim, Obuchi and senior cabinet ministers from both sides met in the southern Japanese city of Kagoshima to keep up the momentum in improved relations between the two nations. Kim said South Korea agreed with Japan and Washington the underground site and reports North Korea was stepping up missile production posed threats to peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Pyongyang has repeatedly denied the charges and accused the United States of waging a smear campaign to set the stage for an invasion of its territory from the south.

Kim cautioned against an overreaction to the developments and said diplomacy was still the best hope of easing tensions.

North Korea and the United States are due to resume talks in New York on Dec. 4 over the suspected nuclear site.

The two Koreas, China and the United States are also involved in separate talks to bring a permanent peace to the region.

Pyongyang has sent out mixed signals how it would go to end the state of war that has trapped the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas since the 1950-53 Korean war.

While it has also fired a rocket over Japan and

infiltrated commandos into South Korea, North Korea last week welcomed the first South Korean tourists and changed its constitution to allow first tentative moves towards a market economy.

Some North Korea watchers believe help in easing the crisis could be on the way in the coming weeks in the form of pressure on Pyongyang from its Korean war allies China and Russia.

Russian and North Korean diplomats will discuss a new treaty between the two countries along with other issues this week.

The talks Monday and Tuesday will consider security issues on the Korean peninsula.

Russia's close Communist-era ties with Pyongyang have cooled in recent years and Moscow has focused on upgrading commercial and other contacts with South Korea.

Russian Foreign Minister Vladimir Lukin told a news briefing last week Russia sought strict enforcement of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula.

"But we would like these problems resolved peacefully without any whipping up of passions," he said.

During the current visit to Japan by Chinese President Jiang Zemin, a Beijing official said China was also determined tension should be eased on the peninsula.

"We don't approve of anything that would upset peace and stability in that region," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao told reporters after a meeting between Obuchi and Jiang.

During their talks, Obuchi asked for China's help in defusing tension on the peninsula.

"We do have a lot of interests in common with China in terms of the need to prevent North Korea from following a certain path of isolating itself from the rest of the world community and pursuing a very dangerous path of nuclear development," a Japanese foreign ministry spokesman said ahead of the talks.

"It's fair to say we'd welcome any role that may be played by China in this regard."

Rescue attempt to save film-makers stranded on Siberian island

SYDNEY (AFP) — A dramatic rescue attempt is to be made to save a three-man film crew trapped by blizzards on an isolated Siberian island with food rations almost exhausted, Australian officials said Sunday.

Australian Rory McGuinness and his colleagues, a Japanese journalist and a Russian scientist, were making a documentary for New Zealand and Japanese television on polar bears and seals on Wrangelya island, which is inhabited by about 30 people.

In Tokyo, Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) identified the Japanese journalist as Tatsuhiko Kobayashi, a 34-year-old science programme director for the network, and the Russian as Nikita Ovsyanikov.

They have been trapped since mid-October following the early onset of winter.

Russian emergency services will attempt to rescue the trio by helicopter Monday, weather permitting. Australia's foreign affairs department said.

A previous attempt to rescue them by helicopter and another to reach them by snowmobile last week were abandoned due to the extreme conditions.

"They've been trying to get out for five weeks but have been hampered by blizzards, extremely high winds and temperatures that have fallen below 20 degrees Celsius," a department spokesman told reporters.

"Our concern now is that their food and fuel supplies are getting low and could run out in a few days."

"In particular, we're concerned about the fuel because it's essential for heating in the extreme cold."

Attempts by villagers to reach

the trio, who are living in a hut on the southern side of the island 120 kilometres from its sole settlement, have failed.

The weather has prevented food being delivered from the mainland by helicopter to the village and the trapped foreigners.

McGuinness has maintained contact with his partner Rebecca Scott by satellite telephone every two to three days.

"The situation is pretty dire," she told reporters at her home in the Australian state of Victoria.

"It is not immediately life threatening, but when they run out of food in a few days, it becomes pretty life threatening."

Weather forecasters Sunday predicted a violent cyclone over the region.

Scott said the trio was "not equipped with suitable equipment, as they never expected to be stranded in the dark Arctic winter."

"The weather has been absolutely appalling — blizzards and the polar night came in on Nov. 21 so the sun doesn't rise any more. They have some twilight," she said but the crew was living in was fairly substantial and the men were attempting to build a snow wall to lower the wind chill factor inside the building.

McGuinness has travelled around the world shooting wildlife documentaries.

A spokesman for the Japanese national television network said none of the three had suffered any injury.

"The three are losing their weight, but they are not in bad health," the spokesman said. "We are cooperating with the Australian and Russian sides closely and will dispatch a helicopter to rescue them as soon as possible."

Tigers raise Sri Lanka peace hopes with talks offer

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's minority parties Sunday urged the government to accept peace talks offered by Tamil rebels, but officials remained cautious as fresh fighting killed seven more people.

Tamil politicians asked President Chandrika Kumaratunga to respond positively to Friday's offer of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to resume political negotiations.

"The government can make use of this and go for talks," Tamil legislator Dharmalingam Sidhathan said. "It should not be like in the past where you go on talking and talking. You must agree to a specified time period."

Sidhathan, whose People's Liberation Front (DPLF) is opposed to the Tigers, said remarks by Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran provided hope of ending the stalemate in the conflict which has killed more than 55,000 people.

The LTTE leader in a speech broadcast over his clandestine Voice of Tigers radio to commemorate thousands of his cadres killed in the campaign for an independent homeland

said they favoured third party mediated talks.

There was no formal reaction from the administration but the state-run Sunday Observer said the government was cautious over the LTTE call for talks and officials would not immediately take a "definite position" on the offer.

Even as political parties were mulling over remarks of Prabhakaran, a defence ministry spokesman here said that the LTTE had carried out a fresh attack in the northeast of the country Sunday, killing five soldiers.

Three soldiers were seriously wounded while four more were reported missing in action following the ambush in the Muttur area of the Trincomalee district. The ministry said two Tigers were killed by troops in a clash elsewhere.

The LTTE leader in his speech Friday made it clear he was making the talks offer from a position of strength after capturing a key army base in the north two months ago.

His Voice of Tigers radio also admitted for the first time that they had acquired aircraft and said helicopters were used to drop flowers over martyrs' cemeteries in the north-east

Friday.

Political analysts said the government would be in a dilemma on how to react to the latest peace bid.

The government has been demanding that the Tigers make a declaration of their intent to surrender arms, agree to conclude political talks within a specified time and recognise the right of others to join a peace process.

"We are not prepared to accept pre-conditions for political dialogue," the Tiger leader said. "They (Tamil people) want the war to come to an end and the occupation army that torments them to withdraw and their urgent essential problems addressed immediately."

"... we are prepared to engage in initial talks to discuss the removal of such pressures and to work out a basic framework for political negotiations."

Tamil legislator Sidhathan said although Prabhakaran was calling for talks "without pre-conditions" they were in fact calling for a cease-fire, withdrawal of troops and the lifting of an economic embargo on areas held by them.

"Apart from all that, the issue is not when but what you are going to discuss with the

LTTE," Sidhathan said.

The remarks were echoed by another Tamil group, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), as well as the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP).

Both parties asked the government and the opposition United National Party (UNP) to respond positively to the Tiger initiative. The opposition UNP which has also called for unconditional talks with the LTTE was not immediately available for comment on the latest Tiger offer.

Last month the LTTE freed a group of Sri Lankan soldiers after holding them for nearly five years. The move heightened speculation that the rebels might be seeking peace talks.

Justice Minister G. L. Peiris told reporters recently that President Chandrika Kumaratunga had "no strong objection" to involving a third-party when the "time was right to open talks."

Peace talks between the Kumaratunga government and the LTTE ended in failure in April 1995 after a 100-day truce. Two previous peace bids also collapsed, leading to more bloodshed.

Chile steps up pressure on Britain to free Pinochet

LONDON (AFP) — Chile Sunday stepped up pressure on Britain to release former dictator Augusto Pinochet to stand trial in his own country.

Chile's Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza said neither Britain nor Spain, which is seeking Pinochet's extradition on charges of murder and torture, were the right places to try the 83-year-old general.

"I believe that in Spain or in Britain you only get symbolic justice because you would never be able to find out and to investigate what really happened in Chile," he told BBC television.

"The only real chance, and I'm not saying it's a sure chance, to have some kind of justice and truth is in Chile where the events happened."

The British press reported Sunday that Britain and Chile were close to a deal under which Pinochet would be sent home to stand trial.

Press reports said senior British ministers privately believed the Chilean proposal was the best way to bring Pinochet to justice without destabilising Chile's fragile democracy or further harming Britain's trade relations with Santiago.

Pinochet is facing 14 private prosecutions from victims of his 1973-1990 military dictatorship in Chile and Insulza — currently in London to plea for the general's release on humanitarian and political grounds — said a state prosecution could follow.

In Chile the investigation is being led by judge Juan Guzman Tapia.

"I think that he's conducting a serious investigation," Insulza said, adding: "I think the government is going to do even more to make sure that the investigation goes forward, but of course you can never say 'I assure you he's going to jail'."

Pinochet was arrested in London on Oct. 16 by British police acting on an international warrant from Spain.

A Spanish prosecutor wants Pinochet extradited to stand trial in Spain on charges of murder and torture committed during his military rule in Chile.

Britain's Law Lords last week ruled Pinochet was not immune from prosecution, paving the way for a lengthy extradition procedure.

Britain's Home Secretary Jack Straw now has until Dec. 11 to rule on whether the extradition process can continue.

Meanwhile, sources in Britain said Pinochet could shortly leave the Grovelands Prison Hospital in north London where he is recovering from back surgery under police guard and transfer to a private residence.

The weekly Mail Sunday reported that Pinochet would next week head for a luxury country home in Surrey, southwest of London.

IAEA chief arrives to discuss N. Korea's suspect nuclear facility

SEOUL (AFP) — The chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) arrived here Sunday to discuss concerns over a North Korean underground complex, suspected of being used to revive its nuclear weapons programme.

IAEA president Mohammad ElBaradei is to meet South Korean President Kim Dae-jung Monday.

ElBaradei's visit came amid a growing row over U.S. pressure that reclusive North Korea allow access to its suspect underground installations.

North Korea has angrily rebuffed the U.S. demand, describing the complex as a "civil underground structure."

It also insisted it would allow the inspection if Washington paid compensation.

Before coming here, ElBaradei warned that Pyongyang had refused to cooperate under a nuclear safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

"Since 1995 there has been no progress in our efforts to obtain access to the information which the agency deems necessary," he told the IAEA

board of governors meeting in Vienna last week.

"We will continue to follow up on this issue to the extent that relevant information is available to us and take whatever action may be necessary under the safeguards agreement," ElBaradei said.

Under a 1994 agreement, the United States promised to supply light water reactors and fuel oil to North Korea in return for a freeze on its declared nuclear site in Yongbyon.

But U.S. intelligence satellites spotted a new underground site this year in Kunchangni near Yongbyon. Washington has suggested that activity at the site points to attempts by North Korea to revive its nuclear programme.

The United States has told North Korea the 1994 nuclear agreement could be scrapped unless it opens up the suspect Kunchangni site to inspections.

U.S. officials said North Korea asked for millions of dollars, perhaps as much as \$300 million, to allow a U.S. inspection of the suspect complex.

Throwing a banquet, Thai town says thanks to its monkeys

LOPBURI, Thailand (AP) — With big appetites and their own version of table manners, hundreds of monkeys got their annual reward Sunday for bringing good fortune to this central Thailand town — a feast served up on red table cloths.

Scotting down from their perches in ancient temples, squads of simians descended upon a dozen banquet tables to grab noodles, popcorn, mangoes, papayas, nuts and soft drinks.

While the macaques appeared to have learned little etiquette of sit-down dinners in the 10 years since the feast started, a certain madness emerged.

Rather than overwhelm the tables, aggressive males helped themselves to the chow first, followed by shy mother

and their babies.

Older, experienced types plopped themselves casually at the centre of tables, confidently snuffing themselves, while youngsters would grab a few handfuls from the plates and eat either on the run or crouched under a table.

By day's end, hundreds of monkeys were fed at two sittings within Lopburi's Three Pagoda Compound, watched by thousands of tourists and townsfolk who joined in the merriment while keeping a respectful distance from the diners.


Leading the locals was monkey magnate Yongyuth Kitwatananusont, the 57-year-old son of impoverished Chinese immigrants who suddenly experienced good fortune when they moved to the town.

Yongyuth ascribed it to the monkeys, resident in the town for centuries and traditionally regarded as luck-bringing despite their habit of snatching food from passers-by and food stalls.

Proving there was no business like monkey business, Yongyuth dreamed up the simian feast idea a decade ago. While he makes little or no money from the actual event, tourists crowd the hotels and stores he owns in the town, 115 kilometres north of Bangkok.

He hopes to attract a steady flow of visitors by 2000, when he expects to have opened what he says will be the largest monkey theme park in the world, on 40 acres of land in Lopburi.

He promises it will be a year-round primate paradise.



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التعليقات على مباريات الدوري الإنجليزي متوفرة باللغة العربية على قناة الأولى.

Israeli roads are bulldozing paths of peace

By David Sharrock

WINTER IS arriving late in the West Bank. The fields are freshly ploughed in the stark, uplands south of Hebron, the powdery red soil ready to receive its seeds when the rains finally come.

But across the geometric furrows a monstrous yellow bulldozer is making its way lazily down the valley, accompanied by four slouching Israeli soldiers. It is pushing the earth in its path, making way for one of the costliest roads in Israel, if not the world.

The road to be built here is one of the less publicised products of the Wye Agreement, the reworking of previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians that was finally signed by Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat, at President Clinton's urging, last month.

In return for turning over 10 per cent of the occupied West Bank — plus a patch of the barren Judean desert which is to become a "nature reserve" — Israel has saddled the Palestinian Authority with onerous security commitments.

Although the deal is progressing and the first tranche of land has been returned, the atmosphere between these two "peace partners" becomes ever more rancorous. Ordinary Palestinians are wondering what they are really getting out of a process which promised peace but daily seems to deliver only more humiliation.

The first casualty of the Wye agreement was the ban on "unilateral actions," a euphemism dreamt up by the State Department which means that

Israel should halt all new settlement, while Arafat should stop telling the world that he will declare Palestinian statehood next May when the five-year Oslo interim accords expire.

However, Ariel Sharon, Israel's veteran foreign minister, has urged settlers to grab West Bank hilltops and Arafat and his cabinet have, if anything, stepped up their statehood declarations.

But it is the agreements that Arafat kept hidden from his people that are really hurting Palestinians such as 73-year-old Mohammed Ahmed Snehawh or 16-year-old Akif Jakhadmeh, who sullenly regards the big yellow bulldozer while keeping an eye on his herd of goats: agreements like the road that is to connect the small and isolated Jewish settlements of Tene Amurim and Ashkelot, on the southern fringes of the West Bank close to the town of Dahariyeh.

Just six kilometres long, the road is supposed to improve the security and well-being of the settlers, who number just 30 families at Ashkelot and perhaps a hundred at Tene Amurim, according to Israeli peace monitor groups. So if a settlement bypass road costs a million shekels a kilometre to construct, that's six million (about £1 million) spent on connecting around 600 people living on two tiny hilltops.

The road will certainly not benefit the Palestinian population, for what use is a road that connects two fortified, forbidden zones? It will certainly make life harder for Mohammed Ahmed Snehawh, who is watching his pastures being cleft in two by the big

The United States is footing the bill to the tune of some £700m... the State Department is so embarrassed by the extent of the project that it is obfuscating the issue

yellow bulldozer. "That's my land that they are taking and I can't do a thing about it," says the stooped old man, fiddling anxiously with his keffiyeh headress. "We take our food from this land, it has been in my family since the days of the Turks. We were all glad when they signed this agreement, but when I see them taking our lands, our trees, I get very angry."

It is a picture repeated all over the West Bank, from Ramallah to Nablus, Jenin and Bethlehem. Thirteen new roads leading nowhere except from settlement to settlement. The United States is footing the bill to the tune of

some £700m under the pretext of guaranteeing Israeli security, although the State Department is so embarrassed by the extent of the project that it is obfuscating the issue.

It is all part of Netanyahu's desperate attempts to sweeten the pill for the settlers' leaders, although some observers say the settlers themselves would prefer to accept compensation and leave now, instead of delaying the inevitable.

Rateb Al Asabar, mayor of Dahariyeh, may be a veteran of Arafat's Fateh movement, but he is appalled at what his leader has done. "We were all very surprised, they only let us know a week ago, by which time they had already begun work on the road. Everyone in the village is affected because they are all tied to the land."

"The Palestinian Authority should have consulted with us, but we heard nothing. And they call this 'land for peace'. But without land what are we doing here? They are not giving us land and they are not giving us peace, they are just taking more from us and calling it peace."

Palestinian negotiator Hanan Asfour confirmed that at Wye it was agreed that some bypass roads could be built, but said he was surprised when he discovered there were to be 13.

But it's all a bit late for Mohammed Ahmed Snehawh, who can only watch the slow work of the bulldozer destroying his winter fields. "Nobody came here to protest. Arafat lives in Gaza but I do not know how I am going to live."



— The Guardian Will there be anything left to build on? (AFP photo)

Kicking the habit where it hurts

By Joseph B. Verrongia
Associated Press

ARE YOU willing to give up your sex life for cigarettes? For years, scientists have been warning that smoking can contribute to impotence as well as fertility problems in men.

Now anti-smoking forces have seized on that finding as a potentially powerful new way to get people to kick the habit.

In California, a \$21 million campaign launched in June includes a commercial showing a cigarette dropping limply. The message: "Cigarettes: Still Think They're Sexy?" In Thailand, the health ministry ordered the nation's tobacco monopoly to print a new warning on cigarette packs: "Cigarette smoking causes sexual impotence." In England, public health activists are lobbying for a similar warning label.

The impotence risk — and strategy — are attracting media attention, too. Last Sunday, CBS's television news show "60 Minutes" devoted a segment to the subject.

Activists are hoping the message will get through to people who weren't deterred by the generations of warnings about slow-developing threats

such as cancer, emphysema and heart disease, which altogether kill 400,000 smokers in the United States annually.

"What a terrible problem for the man because he is so physically addicted," said Elizabeth Whelan, director of the American Council on Science and Health, which opposes tobacco companies. "It will be interesting to see if this motivates men — especially young men — to disassociate themselves from that image of impotence." Statistician Steven J. Millroy, who regularly contradicts what he regards as "junk science" and frequently sides with the tobacco industry, said anti-smoking forces are distorting a 1994 study by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention that concluded that smokers are twice as likely as non-smokers to be impotent.

Millroy adjusted the CDC data to consider blood vessel disease, hormone imbalances and other risk factors. As a result, he said, the link between smoking and impotence became statistically insignificant.

The impotence-and-smoking message has been boosted, in part, by the runaway popularity of Viagra.

Pfizer Inc. reported that three of four men who participated in its clinical tri-

als for Viagra were smokers. And, Pfizer found, 21 per cent of men with erectile dysfunction have underlying conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes — all of which can be caused or complicated by smoking.

Urologists say smoking can diminish erections by reducing blood flow in the penis, just as it can clog blood vessels to the heart.

In studies published since 1985 between 39 per cent and 82 per cent of the men suffering from vascular impotence were smokers.

Smoking can reduce fertility in men, too. Chemical compounds in cigarette smoke can change levels of hormones and enzymes that affect the number, shape and mobility of sperm — all important factors in conception.

Clive Barnes, director of the London-based Action on Smoking and Health, said the warnings about smoking and impotence are shockingly effective because cigarettes are so often associated with the after-sex experience.

"The advantage of the penis from a communications point of view is that it is easy to imagine it shrivelled up and shrunken," Barnes said, "whereas damage to other vital organs such as the heart is much less obvious."

Health



Doctors plan 'genetic twin' for every child

By Steve Connor

SCIENTISTS HAVE devised a way of providing every child with its own "body repair kit" by using cloning as a way of generating unlimited supplies of human tissue for transplant surgery.

They believe their plans to create the world's first human clones could revolutionise the treatment of incurable diseases.

Researchers from Britain, who are working with American scientists, have informed government advisers of their plans, which envisage the day when every new-born baby will have its own supply of cloned cells frozen in a national tissue bank for transplant operations in later life.

The team, which includes the scientists who cloned Dolly the sheep, is working on combining those techniques with research on embryonic cells which can develop into blood, bone, muscle and even brain cells. This would enable perfect tissue matches without the risk of rejection which occurs with conventional transplants.

They emphasise that their submission stops short of creating a cloned embryo which develops much beyond a week old, thereby circumventing ethical concerns about the creation of a cloned adult.

The proposals are nevertheless likely to generate a wave of disapproval from groups that are concerned about the rights of unborn children and other ethicists who believe that no form of human cloning should ever be allowed.

The Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, where Dolly was created from the cell of an adult sheep, confirmed this weekend that it is in active negotiations with

scientists who have pioneered the use of embryonic cells for transplant operations.

"We are in confidential discussions with prospective partners but are not yet ready to make a public announcement," said Harry Griffin, the Roslin Institute's assistant director of science.

It is understood, however, that one of the potential partners is the team from the University of Wisconsin-Madison which last week announced that it had identified the embryonic "stem cells" capable of developing into any one of the dozens of different tissues of the body.

The advantage of combining the Dolly cloning technology with the stem cell research is that unlimited supplies of tissue could be generated from the transplant patient who would not need to take drugs to prevent organ rejection.

Ian Wilmut, who led the Dolly research at the Roslin, is also collaborating with Austin Smith, director of the Centre for Genome Research at Edinburgh University, who is the leading exponent of Britain's research effort into human embryonic stem cells.

Dr. Smith said that he has submitted an outline of the collaborative proposals to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), Britain's statutory watchdog on embryo research which is in consultation on the future of human cloning.

"It's an area that the Roslin Institute is very enthusiastic about and we'd like to work together on this. We can't do it at the moment because in the U.K. it is illegal, but this research may help to persuade people of the poten-

tial benefits," Dr. Smith said.

Generating embryonic clones by fusing the cell nucleus of a person with an unfertilised human egg which has had its own nucleus removed promises to allow scientists to extract embryonic stem cells that will be a perfect tissue match of the person in question, Dr. Austin said.

"You'll be able to take tissue samples from babies when they are born and derive stem cells by nuclear transfer in order to freeze them down so that everybody will have their own embryonic stem cells," he said.

"That's not what we can do today, but at the research level that's what we're thinking. I think it would be possible in a couple of years."

In his submission to the HFEA, Dr. Smith calls for an extension of the regulations covering human embryo research so that "therapeutic cloning" is permitted. He still voices his opposition to "reproductive cloning" which would result in the a fully mature adult clone.

"For isolation of embryonic stem cells, embryos are only required to develop to the blastocyst stage, which falls well within the 14-day limit of current legislation," he says in the submission.

A spokesman for the HFEA said that the suggestions of Dr. Smith and the Roslin scientists are being "actively considered" by the authority.

"It's on the agenda. We haven't received an application but clearly the concept has been made to us. We're discussing it in a general context," said the spokesman.

— The Sunday Times

Group attacks breast cancer prevention diet book

By Daniel Q. Haney
Associated Press

A HEALTH watchdog organisation issued a sharply worded critique Monday of a TV doctor's best-selling diet book for preventing breast cancer, calling it bad science and a disservice to women.

The American Council on Science and Health said Bob Arnot's book makes unfounded claims about the power of food to both cause and prevent breast cancer.

The book, "The Breast Cancer Prevention Diet," was No. 1 on The New York Times list of best-selling advice books on Sunday.

"We are trying to clarify the lack of good science in this book," said Elizabeth M. Whelan, the organisation's president.

"We think this hurts women, absolutely." The organisation posted its 17-page analysis on its Web site and asked broadcasters that have promoted the book — including Arnot's employer, NBC — for a chance to rebut some of its claims.

Arnot responded by calling the report "voodoo consumerism, a sham, an outright front for the food and chemical industry." The organisation said more than half of its funding comes from non-profit foundations, while food and chemical companies provide less than 30 per cent.

In the book, Arnot wrote: "Nutrition is emerging as the most important way to prevent breast cancer." Among other things, the book recommends women eat soy, fish oil and flax seed to prevent cancer. And it says they should minimise a variety of common foods, including potatoes, white bread, instant rice and parsnips.

While the links between diet and cancer are a hot subject of research, many experts believe there are few definitive answers yet. They recommend fruits and vegetables along with avoiding obesity, but they generally say no diet has been proven to prevent breast cancer.

Spokeswomen for the American Cancer Society and the Memorial-Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre in New York City said their organisations also have concerns about the book.

Avice Meehan, a spokeswoman for Memorial-Sloan Kettering, said she called Arnot a few weeks ago to tell him doctors there were unhappy with "inaccuracies and misstatements" regarding their work. She said Arnot agreed to remove references to the hospital in the book's next edition. "I do not believe it would be the opinion of our staff that there is a diet that can prevent breast cancer," Meehan said.

At the cancer society, spokeswoman Joann Schellenbach said that while the book's advice on losing weight and exercise is sound, some of the nutritional material is highly speculative.

"The title is probably the worst problem with the book," she said. "As far as we are concerned, there's no body of scientific evidence to support the idea there is a diet that will prevent breast cancer." Arnot said he firmly believes that women can reduce their risk of breast cancer by changing what they eat.

"Someone's got to get out in front and take a stand, and that's what I've done with this book," he said.

Study: New AIDS treatment flushes virus from a few patients

By Joseph B. Verrongia
Associated Press

FEDERAL RESEARCHERS say they have managed to flush the AIDS virus out from one of its most stubborn hiding places and erase it to undetectable levels in a handful of patients.

Dr. Anthony Fauci and other researchers at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases cautioned that their method of rinsing the virus from resting immune cells is highly experimental and unconfirmed.

However, the technique appears to have removed HIV from the blood of three of the 26 patients in the study. In one of the three, there was no trace of the virus in the lymph nodes,

Fauci said it would take years of follow-up studies to determine if the treatment works. The process still could be derailed by toxic side effects, or the ability of the virus to develop a resistance to the therapy.

Still, researchers said, it is a promising step in the battle against AIDS.

Now that powerful drug combinations work effectively in many patients to reduce the virus to extremely low levels, the next — and perhaps — final step is to find ways in which the remaining copies of the virus can be flushed from its deepest haunts so antiviral drugs can erase those traces, too.

Data on the patients was discussed Sunday in Denver at the annual meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

"It's conceivable that we'll take these people off their drugs and the disease will come roaring back from a reservoir we didn't find," Fauci said in the Monday edition of USA Today.

Another hurdle is whether new cells can be infected by the virus as it is flushed out — in effect, whether the aggressive treatment might inadvertently continue the disease cycle.

"We would like to get to the point of sterilising immunity," said Roger Pomerantz of Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, who did not work on the study. "But different patients may react differently."

"In some, you might eradicate the virus and in others, the virus may be activated and infect new cells," Pomerantz said.

"You might not be able to withdraw therapy," Fauci and his team originally announced their experimental treatment last February.

The treatment targets CD4T cells, which function as the immune system's memory and are found throughout the body. They appear to hang onto the blueprint of bacteria and viruses for as long as 10 years so the body will recognise the infection and mount a defense if it appears again.

In the case of AIDS, the genetic coding of the virus takes up long-term residence in the genes of the CD4T cells. This protects the virus from drugs when it circulates in the bloodstream.

When the body's immune system is activated to fight an infection — or when drug therapy

slips — these cells turn on and produce HIV again.

In the study, 26 men were given a combination of three anti-HIV drugs in an AIDS "cocktail treatment." Fourteen also were given the powerful immune system stimulator Interleukin-2.

IL-2 is the synthetic version of a substance naturally produced by the immune system. It alerts several types of disease-fighting cells to begin reproducing and fighting an invading infection.

Researchers believed that the IL-2 would activate dormant, infected CD4T cells. This would expose these reservoirs and the drug cocktail would eradicate it.

After the treatment, researchers said they

could not grow live HIV from more than 300 million immune cells extracted from three men in the study.

Later this year, the researchers said they would take the three men off of the drug cocktail therapy to see if their viral loads increase again.

The other 23 men in the study remained HIV-positive, researchers said. Fauci said repeated treatments with IL-2 might be necessary.

In other studies announced at the meeting, virologists said HIV-infected immune cells were hiding in semen. They may lurk in even more inaccessible sites in the body, including the brain and the retina.

Daily
A review

ment may take the opportunity of the economic downturn to instill some sound economic principles into their people, diplomats said.

Fuel prices were raised earlier this year, albeit by a

minute amount, but it was the principle of paying more for services rather than the actual extra revenue that will be raised that was significant, they said.

"The increase was tiny

There are also suggestions that small charges might be levied for electricity and water and health insurance for expatriates,

who have until now received free health care, is also being mooted.

"What will slow in the short term in Qatar is the internal market both in terms of construction and consumption but in the

consumption, but in the long-term, the prosperity of Qatar is assured," the Western diplomat said.

| Exchange Rates | | Sunday, 29 - 31 - 88 | | ACCESS 441483 | |
|--------------------|---------|----------------------|--------|---------------|---------|
| | | B.B.S. | S.A.S. | | |
| JORDAN DINAR | 1.0000 | 0.1887 | 0.1927 | 1.8778 | 0.1844 |
| SAUDI RIYAL | 5.2883 | 1.0000 | 1.0210 | 8.9463 | 1.7321 |
| BAHD DHAAM | 5.1883 | 0.9794 | 1.0000 | 9.7446 | 1.0088 |
| BAHRAIN DINAR | 0.5325 | 0.1005 | 0.1028 | 1.0000 | 0.1035 |
| OMAN RIYAL | 0.5459 | 0.1028 | 0.1042 | 1.0213 | 1.0000 |
| QATAR RIYAL | 5.1434 | 0.9708 | 1.0162 | 8.8584 | 1.9572 |
| KUWAIT RIYAL | 4.4266 | 0.9809 | 0.0826 | 8.0408 | 0.0833 |
| YEMEN POUND | 0.4915 | 0.9087 | 0.9278 | 9.0408 | 0.7829 |
| LEBANON LIRA | 21.4831 | 0.0547 | 0.1399 | 40.3416 | 38.5014 |
| US DOLLAR | 1.4124 | 0.2688 | 0.2722 | 2.8523 | 2.8971 |
| BRITISH STERLING | 0.8539 | 0.1612 | 0.1848 | 1.9338 | 1.3702 |
| GERMAN MARK | 2.4195 | 0.4957 | 0.4882 | 4.9534 | 4.4478 |
| SWITZERLAND FR. | 1.1585 | 0.3708 | 0.3847 | 3.7480 | 3.7100 |
| FRANCE FRANK | 8.1185 | 1.5325 | 1.5547 | 15.2471 | 14.9825 |
| JAPAN YEN * | 17.1360 | 0.3280 | 0.3349 | 3.2637 | 3.1987 |
| HOLLAND GUILD | 2.7281 | 0.5148 | 0.5257 | 5.1229 | 5.0153 |
| SWEDEN KRONA | 11.5727 | 2.8142 | 2.2301 | 21.7317 | 21.7091 |
| ITALY LIRA * | 23.8547 | 4.5212 | 4.4296 | 44.5879 | 44.4680 |
| BELGIUM FRANC | 1.5245 | 0.2708 | 0.2717 | 2.7071 | 2.7000 |
| AUSTRALIA DOLLAR | 2.2298 | 0.4208 | 0.4291 | 4.1888 | 4.0582 |
| CYPRUS POUND | 4.0807 | 0.7564 | 0.7825 | 7.6254 | 7.5966 |
| NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR | 2.8782 | 0.5432 | 0.5457 | 5.4049 | 5.2923 |
| AUSTRIA SCHILLING | 17.0325 | 3.2147 | 3.2873 | 31.8462 | 31.5180 |
| CANADA DOLLAR | 2.1681 | 0.4082 | 0.4114 | 4.0713 | 3.9886 |
| EURO | 1.2293 | 0.2330 | 0.2389 | 2.3084 | 2.2603 |

The slowdown will send unemployment higher, to 7.4 per cent next year and 8.0 per cent in 2000 from 6.5 per cent in 1999, the OECD says.

cent in 1998, the OECD said, but wage pressures in the private sector should ease, bringing inflation in line with the government's target of 2.5 per cent.

But the introduction of a minimum wage at the beginning of 1999 and calls for higher salaries in the public sector could cause more

inflationary pressure, the report said.

Britain raised interest rates several times from mid-1997 to prevent the economy overheating, but rates have since fallen as the effects of the Asian crisis began to bite.

is-hit farms

| MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN | | | | |
| NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES | | | | |
| DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES | | | | |
| CURRENCY | 1 M | 3 M | 6 M | 1 YEAR |
| US DOLLAR | 4.7100 | 4.8000 | 4.7000 | 4.7000 |
| GBRITAIN STERLING | 6.8800 | 6.8200 | 6.4300 | 6.1200 |
| FRANCE FRANC | 3.2186 | 3.1976 | 3.2186 | 3.1875 |
| GERMANY MARK | 3.2186 | 3.3790 | 3.3190 | 3.2600 |
| SWITZERLAND FRANC | 1.1875 | 1.4375 | 1.4688 | 1.3825 |
| JAPAN YEN | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |

| CURRENCY | ASK | BID |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| US DOLLAR | 0.7080 | 0.7080 |
| GBRITAIN STERLING | 1.1887 | 1.1788 |
| GERMANY MARK | 0.4128 | 0.4149 |
| SWITZERLAND FRANC | 0.5008 | 0.5000 |
| FRANCE FRANC | 0.1231 | 0.1228 |
| JAPAN YEN | 0.5748 | 0.5771 |
| HOLLAND GUILDER | 0.2682 | 0.2682 |
| ITALY LIRA | 0.0417 | 0.0418 |
| SPAIN | 0.8125 | 0.8125 |

| WORLD STOCK MARKETS | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|----------|------------|---------|
| STOCK MARKET | INDEX | CLOSING | LAST CLOSE | CHANGE |
| FRANKFURT | DAX | 5121.48 | 5051.83 | 69.65 |
| HONG KONG | HANG SENG | 10742.11 | 10778.82 | -36.81 |
| LONDON | FT-SE 100 | 5844.20 | 5827.30 | 16.20 |
| NEW YORK | DJ INDUSE | 9333.08 | 9314.28 | 18.80 |
| NEW YORK | NYSE COMPOSITE | 283.00 | 961.03 | -288.03 |
| NEW YORK | AMEX COMPOSITE | 873.92 | 868.34 | 4.58 |
| NEW YORK | S&P 500 | 1162.25 | 1165.87 | -3.62 |
| TOKYO | NIKKEI-225 | 19069.36 | 19327.77 | -128.38 |
| PARIS | CAC 40 | 3919.63 | 3948.84 | -66.69 |
| FRANKFURT | COMMERZBANK | 4943.70 | 4940.10 | 3.60 |

| PRECIOUS METALS | | | |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--|
| METAL | ASK | BID | |
| GOLD | 285.80 | 286.10 | |
| SILVER | 4.92 | 4.85 | |
| PLATINUM | 350.50 | 322.50 | |

world's second-biggest wheat
decline occurred in receipts for
have been particularly affected by
world markets," the federal
then hit hard by a plunge in glob-
prices spurred by the economic
in Russia.
reports in Canadian newspa-
ture minister will request a
billion Canadian dollars over

Showtime Breaks the Pay Television Price Barrier in Jordan

— The Very Best in Western TV Entertainment for less than JD2 per day —

HOWTIME, the fastest growing satellite television network in the Middle East, has broken the price barrier by introducing a hardware leasing scheme that means subscribers can now watch the best in Western TV entertainment for less than JD2 per day.

Commenting on the launch of the leasing scheme in Jordan, Samer Karaman, Showtime's Regional Sales Director, said: "This deal represents tremendous value for money and has already enjoyed a very successful response in other Middle East countries. Showtime is confident that

viewers in Jordan who want to watch the latest Hollywood movies, dramas, comedies and English Premier League football will want to take up this offer."

For a little as JD39 per month, subscribers can now lease the Showtime satellite decoder and receive the menu bouquet which includes The Movie Channel and a choice of any two additional channels from the 11 on the Showtime network. Alternatively, leasing subscribers can receive the complete channel line up for just an additional JD10 per month.

Peanuts

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HALT! THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!

Andy Capp

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WHAT'S NEW, DEAR?

NOW HE'S SUGGESTING A TRIAL MARRIAGE, FLO

I'D THINK TWICE ABOUT THAT, DEAR—

THEY CAN SOMETIMES LEAD TO THE REAL THING

Mutt'n' Jeff

WE WANT TO SEE THE EDITOR

YEAH, ABOUT A STORY "DOCK" JUST A MOMENT PLEASE

MR. EDITOR, HAVE WE GOT A STORY?

IT'S A SENSATION

WHAT KIND OF A STORY?

A GOOD STORY!

AND IT'S TIMELY! VERY TIMELY!

TIMELY? WHAT IS IT?

IF WE DON'T GET UP IN MY MIND'S EYE BY 9 O'CLOCK! I'LL BEAT THE LEAD BUS! I'LL BEAT PUT UP MYSELF!

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

Circles in this feature designate the start and end of a word.

"I've been with Todd for six months and our love is getting deeper and deeper...like the Titanic."

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

MOBUX

BREHT

CONNAY

YURNUL

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THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Anglin

Now come back to me

WHAT THE BUS DRIVER DIRECTED HIS DANCE PARTNER TO MAKE.

Now arrange the circles below to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A " () () () () " () () () ()

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's
Jumbles: BALMY
CRAWL
DEFILE
ORCHID

HOROSCOPES

FORECAST FOR MONDAY,

By Linda C. Black, Tribune

GEMINI (March 21 to April 19) *Follow the weekend, but now it's serious. That might be nothing if it's loving. If you love your work, your enthusiasm shows, and make it now the way it is in your life or correction.*

CANCER (April 20 to May 20) *Struggle between you and what you can't just push through this week inspired. Actually, the struggle up with some sort of inspiration lacking.*

LEO (May 21 to June 21) *Struggle, especially from someone else. Don't worry. This is like a person much fun, you forget to take time an appointment, for someone you'd rather not.*

VIRGO (June 22 to July 22) *Struggle, but don't fuss. Conditions you involve other people if it needs have been just waiting coming up today is bigger than you have a hassle when you're fully 23 to August 22) You might even a little too loud.*

LIBRA (July 23 to August 22) *You might even a little too loud. If you're in a confined setting, it's difficult for many people to get along with much trouble, but occasionally say something you regret.*

SAGITTARIUS (August 23 to September 22) *Struggle at your house. Expect the friend has done or said something, give it some thought. More time wind out of place can't jump to conclusions. Ask for clarification. Later, and that's no money, however. Your spending when you're in this kind of a tight budget. You do have a lot that should be what you do about.*

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 22) *Struggle about your money you do not make sure it's kept confidential in any way, but this could be if he's been doing more than if he's making, speak up about it.*

PISCES (November 23 to December 22) *Struggle, charming and good to work gets done and you have to get up to you to provide that. That's all you have to worry about. Carry sailing.*

AQUARIUS (December 23 to January 22) *Struggle to shape so you can be confident will be better for romantic. If you'd rather spend the time on great for wallowing in something you always enjoy, like a movie. Enjoy!*

TAURUS (January 23 to February 22) *Struggle for information this morning. If you usually think things, you can throw you into a dizzy, I can't throw will be everywhere to put in, so by tomorrow's running on rails.*

GEMINI (February 19 to March 19) *Struggle, you don't have enough motivation. A problem this afternoon that don't worry. Even bricks have teeth, if you know.*

Birth Stone of November: 1

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Azar defends government intervention to stimulate economy, avoid or end recession

WASEF AZAR, general manager of the Jordan National Bank said in a recent lecture that modern countries exercise many forms of intervention in economic activity up to a certain level that would protect their economies and output. "Consequently, I see no reason why the productive investment arena and act as a stimulant for investment in the national economy if the situation warrants or if such an intervention would help get rid of recession," he emphasized.

The lecturer said that if money cannot be secured for the public sector from the general budget, the government can generate funds for this purpose from selling some of its equity in Jordanian companies. Azar indicated that economic development means increasing domestic or national income and that cannot be achieved except through higher production. "Some may come from higher productivity and from improving the utilisation of invested resources but the majority cannot be accomplished except through adding new investments that should be put in productive commodity or services sectors and in basic facilities," he stressed.

Azar highlighted national savings as the most important source of funding the investments because it is the only one that, in general, would not result in any negative consequences to the national economy. He noted that financing investments through borrowing from outside would be a heavy burden on the national economy if it exceeds a certain level in terms of ser-

vicing the foreign debt and repaying it. The senior banker stressed that investments in projects of high productivity would result, in addition to higher income, in creating new job opportunities that would ease unemployment and absorb newcomers to the labour market. It would result also in bringing up the living standard of the people "especially if a tax structure is introduced to help redistribute the income."

He said that a continued enlargement of the government would lead to higher taxes and to absorbing much of the financial surpluses which the private sector could use in the area of investment. Moreover, he added, taking the state revenue to finance the regular and normal government functions would prevent the tools of the financial and tax policies from being used as one of the development tools.

The government's recurrent spending, Azar pointed out, keeps the state's general budget away from the economic activity and transforms the tax policy to only a collection process that would not be easy to use for development requirements.

Azar concluded by emphasising that giving greater attention to exports should not mean in any way neglecting or easing the focus on producing the requirements of the local market. "Experiences of many nations teach us that the best solution for a country is that which depends on both the local market and export markets," he indicated stressing that depending on any of them alone would expose the national economy to may risks (Al Dustour).

French firm builds most up-to-date Mideast oil refinery in Egypt

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt (AFP) — The French firm Technip is building an ultra-sophisticated oil refinery worth more than a billion dollars in northern Egypt, with Egyptian and Israeli private investors partially footing the bill.

The Middle East Oil Refinery (MIDOR) is expected to be the most modern of its kind in the Middle East and will compete with southern European refineries to sell its products in the Mediterranean basin, officials said.

Construction work in the Amreya industrial zone on the eastern fringes of Alexandria began in July 1997, less than a year after the November 1996 Middle East and North Africa Economic

forum (MENA).

The refinery will be able to process five million tonnes of oil annually, and is expected to go into business in 2001 with the most up-to-date environmental protection technology, officials said.

Unlike other refineries in the region which focus on the production of fuel oil, MIDOR will produce essentially low-level sulfur products such as kerosene, naphtha and coke.

Some of these products will be sold domestically but some will also be exported to markets across the Mediterranean.

A consortium grouping Technip France and its subsidiaries Technip Italy and Technip International signed a contract with

MIDOR to provide civil engineering expertise, construction and equipment, while another deal was sealed with the Middle East Oil Tankage and Pipelines Co. (MIDTAP) for storage and general services.

When the MIDOR project first emerged the refinery was dubbed "the peace refinery" because it was expected to bolster Egyptian-Israeli economic relations, on the fringes of the Middle East peace process.

Initially, Israeli and Egyptian private-sector firms were each to control 40 per cent of the capital, with the rest held by the public sector Egyptian Petroleum Corporation.

But after the assassination of Israeli prime minis-

ter Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist opposed to Arab-Israeli peace talks, and subsequent political changes in Israel, the Israeli share was halved.

The Israeli firm Merhav now has a 20 per cent stake, while the Egyptian private group Salem holds a similar share, and the rest is controlled by banks and public sector firms.

The problem is more emotional than political, said Egyptian Oil Minister Hamdi Al Banbi, playing

down the decreased Israeli participation.

"Private funds can only be attracted where there is a climate of trust. As far as we are concerned, we are ready to export any excess products, even to Israel," Banbi said.

Egypt is the 17th producer of oil worldwide and has 2.9 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and 36 trillion cubic feet in gas reserves, Banbi said in press statements in October.

Exxon and Mobil confirm merger talks

NEW YORK (AFP) — U.S. oil companies Exxon and Mobil have confirmed they were negotiating a merger to create an industrial behemoth that would dominate the oil sector.

In a joint statement the oil giants said discussions were

under way, leading to "a possible combination transaction."

But they cautioned that "No definitive agreement has been reached. We cannot give any assurance that an agreement will be reached."

Several types of combination are possible, but analysts, citing market speculation, say the most likely scenario is a takeover of Mobil by Exxon. Exxon is the world's biggest energy group and a takeover of Mobil, the second largest U.S. oil group, would be the largest industrial merger to date.

It would also create the biggest oil company in the world — ahead of Anglo-Dutch group Royal Dutch Shell — with a market capitalisation of \$238 billion, almost double the value of Royal Dutch Shell (\$101 billion).

The move appears to be a function of the continuing consolidation of the sector. The British company, British Petroleum, and its American partner, Amoco, have just finalised their merger, announced this summer, making them the industry's third-ranking group.

Meanwhile, the French company Elf-Aquitane is reportedly interested in acquiring Belgium's Petrofina.

The trend is being fuelled by falling oil prices as oil companies seek economies of scale in order to cut costs and improve margins.

Prices have hit a record low in recent weeks, and were further undermined by the failure of OPEC to agree measures to stem the decline. The Organisation of Petro-

leum Exporting Countries (OPEC) finished a key meeting on Thursday without being able to agree on new production cuts, or even on extending current production cuts in order to prop up prices.

Analysts predict that only U.S. military intervention against Iraq, a boost to flagging world economic growth or an unexpectedly cold winter in the northern hemisphere would provoke a rise in prices.

The effect is beginning to show on oil companies' balance sheets. Exxon's profits for the first nine months of this year fell almost a third to \$4.9 billion.

The global crisis also slashed Mobil's profits by 28 per cent, down to \$1.8 billion. But even if the two giants agree the terms of a takeover, they would still have to win the approval of regulatory authorities both in the United States and Europe.

Ironically a merger would recreate the Standard Oil of the famous millionaire, John Rockefeller.

The company was forced to spin off its operations into two separate companies by U.S. anti-trust authorities in 1911.

One became Standard Oil, later Exxon, based in New Jersey, while the other became Standard Oil of New York, later Mobil.

Exxon, based in Irving, Texas, posted net income of \$8.4 billion on revenues of \$137 billion in 1997.

Mobil, which has its headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia, posted net income of \$3.2 billion on revenues of \$66 billion the same year.

A.F.M. TRADE Sunday, 29-11-98

ACCESS 4646868

| Company | Open | Close | Change |
|-------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| BANKS | | | |
| ARAB B | 205.500 | 205.500 | +1.45% |
| ATYONAL B | 1.500 | 1.500 | +1.27% |
| B. OF JOR | 1.110 | 1.110 | 0.00% |
| MIDDLE EAST B | 1.040 | 1.070 | +2.88% |
| INDUSTRIAL DEV. B | 1.450 | 1.420 | -0.70% |
| THE HOUSING B | 2.770 | 2.770 | 0.00% |
| JOR KUWAIT B | 1.660 | 1.720 | +3.61% |
| JOR GULF B | 0.740 | 0.760 | +2.70% |
| JOR ISLAMIC B | 1.850 | 1.850 | +2.42% |
| BEST EL MAL | 0.880 | 0.880 | 0.00% |
| PHILADELPHIA B | 0.910 | 0.910 | 0.00% |

BANKS INDEX 275.270 point = +1.18%

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| INSURANCE | | | |
| JERUSALEM INS | 1.450 | 1.380 | -4.83% |
| JOR FRENCH INS | 2.740 | 2.700 | -1.46% |

INSURANCE INDEX 126.620 point = -0.56%

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| SERVICES | | | |
| ELECTRIC POWER | 1.460 | 1.450 | -0.68% |
| IRIBID ELECTRICITY | 1.350 | 1.350 | +0.62% |
| ARAS INTER. HOTELS | 4.700 | 4.510 | -4.04% |
| SHIPPING LINES | 1.020 | 1.020 | 0.00% |
| PORTFOLIO SECURITIES | 0.770 | 0.790 | +2.60% |
| JOR INTER. TRADING CEN | 0.590 | 0.590 | +3.59% |
| AL-KAT | 0.300 | 0.300 | 0.00% |
| AL-ZARQA FOR EDU | 0.830 | 0.830 | 0.00% |
| UNIFIED LAND TRANS | 1.100 | 1.120 | +1.82% |
| LIMITED FOR FINANCIAL | 1.020 | 1.070 | +4.90% |
| SERVICES INDEX | 101.700 | 101.700 | -1.32% |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| INDUSTRY | | | |
| CEMENT | 2.450 | 2.420 | -1.22% |
| PHOSPHATE | 1.140 | 1.150 | +0.88% |
| PETROLEUM REFINERY | 10.240 | 10.230 | -0.10% |
| JOR TANNING | 5.300 | 5.300 | 0.00% |
| THE INDU. COM. & AGRI | 1.050 | 1.040 | -0.95% |
| ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL | 2.500 | 2.500 | 0.00% |
| CERAMIC INDUS | 1.120 | 1.180 | +5.36% |
| TOBACCO & CIGARET | 1.200 | 1.230 | +2.50% |
| NATIONAL STEEL | 0.480 | 0.490 | +2.08% |
| RAFA | 0.530 | 0.530 | 0.00% |
| DAR AL DAWA | 4.800 | 4.910 | +2.29% |
| JOR STEEL | 0.970 | 0.980 | +1.15% |
| ARAB ALUMINIUM | 1.720 | 1.780 | +3.49% |
| CLORIN | 1.210 | 1.210 | 0.00% |
| LIVESTOCK & POULTRY | 0.410 | 0.420 | +2.44% |
| NATURAL INDUS | 0.380 | 0.380 | 0.00% |
| PETRO - CHEMICAL | 0.400 | 0.400 | 0.00% |
| UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL | 0.970 | 0.970 | 0.00% |
| NATIONAL CABLE | 0.640 | 0.650 | +1.56% |
| SULPHO - CHEMICALS | 0.360 | 0.370 | +2.78% |
| ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR | 1.150 | 1.150 | 0.00% |
| EL-ZAY | 1.080 | 1.080 | 0.00% |
| UNIVERSAL MODERN IND | 0.620 | 0.630 | +1.61% |
| INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES | 0.400 | 0.400 | 0.00% |
| NEW CARPES | 0.600 | 0.600 | 0.00% |
| NATIONAL ALUMINIUM | 0.710 | 0.740 | +4.23% |
| INDUSTRY INDEX | 72.740 | 72.740 | 0.00% |

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| PARALLEL | | | |
| JOR TRADING FACILITIES | 0.390 | 0.390 | +2.63% |
| UNION INVS. CORP | 0.640 | 0.640 | +1.56% |
| AL - EXAL | 0.790 | 0.790 | +1.27% |
| ADVANCED PHAR | 0.530 | 0.530 | 0.00% |
| MEDICAL APPLIANCES | 0.280 | 0.280 | 0.00% |
| AL DAWLAT | 0.580 | 0.570 | -1.72% |
| ARAB INTER. TRADE | 0.210 | 0.200 | -4.76% |
| OPTICAL & AUDIO | 0.330 | 0.330 | 0.00% |
| READY MIX CONCRETE | 0.750 | 0.780 | +4.00% |
| RAMCO | 0.280 | 0.270 | -3.57% |
| TEXTILE & PLASTIC | 0.230 | 0.240 | +4.35% |
| MIDDLE EAST PHAR 90 | 0.830 | 0.840 | +1.20% |
| UNION TOBACCO | 2.280 | 2.300 | +1.75% |
| AL-KAD | 0.590 | 0.590 | +1.70% |
| INTER. CERAMIC | 0.420 | 0.430 | +2.38% |
| NATIONAL POULTRY | 0.540 | 0.540 | 0.00% |
| NUTRI DAR | 0.690 | 0.690 | 0.00% |
| GRAND INDEX | 164.68 | 164.68 | +0.76% |

HOROSCOPE

HOROSCOPE FOR MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You were running pretty wild over the weekend, but now you have financial considerations. That might be nothing more than having to work for a living. If you love your work, this is not a problem. Your enthusiasm shows, and makes everything look easy. If that's not the way it is in your life, maybe it's time to put in the correction.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Someone in authority is standing between you and what you want to accomplish. You can't just push through this barrier. You'll have to do something inspired. Actually, the other person hopes you'll come up with some sort of inspiration to generate the idea that's lacking.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Watch for surprises this morning, especially from someone you thought you knew well. Don't worry. This is like a game. In fact, you could have so much fun, you forget to do something important. Don't miss an appointment, for example, just because it's with somebody you'd rather not see.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You may feel a little harassed, but don't fuss. Conditions will ease considerably once you involve other people in your project. Some of your friends have been just waiting for you to ask. The dice coming up today is bigger than you can do by yourself. Why have a hassle when you could have a party?

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You're enthusiastic, outgoing and maybe even a little too loud. That could cause a problem, if you're in a confined setting. Looks like communications is difficult for many people right now. You're not having as much trouble, but be careful anyway. You might accidentally say something you didn't mean, and later regret.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) There's some confusion at your house. Expect the unexpected. If it seems like a friend has done or said something you just can't figure out, give it some thought. Maybe you misunderstood. Even one word out of place can make a world of difference. Don't jump to conclusions. Ask for clarification instead.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) You've been feeling rambunctious lately, and that's good. Be careful with your money, however. Your spending tends to get a little rowdy when you're in this kind of mood, so make sure you stay within budget. You do have a budget, don't you? If you don't, that should be what you do tonight, before you go shopping.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) If there's anything about your money you don't want everybody to know, make sure it's kept confidential. A rumour is likely to get out anyway, but this could work to your advantage. If you've been doing more than you should for the money you're making, speak up about it now. It could pay off well for you.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're entertaining, charming and good natured, but make sure the paperwork gets done and you have the facts somebody else needs. It's up to you to provide this, so you don't shirk your duty. That's all you have to worry about. Otherwise, it looks like pretty clear sailing.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Whip your place into shape so you can entertain, possibly tonight. Conditions will be better for romance than they've been all week. If you'd rather spend the evening alone, conditions are also great for wallowing in luxury. Treat yourself to something you always enjoy, like a favourite meal, record or movie. Enjoy!

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Continue to gather information this morning. You don't want to act hastily. You usually think things out so carefully, any little error can throw you into a tizzy. Don't be like this morning, because errors will be everywhere. Just look at them as corrections to put in, so by tomorrow, you'll have things pretty much running on rails.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Don't worry if it looks like you don't have enough money to go around. You're improving your skills, and that'll lead to an increase in income. A problem this afternoon looms as a brick wall at first, but don't worry. Even brick walls can be climbed, and some have footholds, if you know how to find them.

Birth Stone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

Japanese trading houses say profits tumbled in first half

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's top trading houses said this week that their profits tumbled in the six months to September as stock losses and falling sales slashed earnings.

Mitsubishi Corp., the largest trader and one of the world's biggest companies, took a heavy profit fall and rivals Sumitomo Corp., Marubeni Corp. and Nissio Iwai Corp. plunged into the red for the half.

Mitsubishi said group pre-tax profit in the half slumped 44.7 per cent to 39.0 billion yen (\$287 million) as the Asian economic crisis cut demand.

"Exports of metals and imports of fuels fell while trading of metals declined in overseas markets," the firm said.

Heavy unrealised losses on the firm's stock holdings ate into profits as Tokyo's Nikkei stock average lurched to near 13-year lows.

Mitsubishi has an extensive share portfolio, with important stakes in its major Japanese business allies.

Group sales fell 10.9 per cent to 7,046.4 billion yen, with net profit down 56.4 per cent at 20.0 billion yen.

"As for domestic trading declines were seen in metal, machinery and chemicals busi-

nesses," Mitsubishi said.

For the full year to next March the company said it would take a group net profit of 34 billion yen, off 38.8 per cent, with sales at 14,500 billion yen, down 8.8 per cent.

Sumitomo Corp., another major trader with a strong web of business allies, took a heavy 58.6 billion yen group net loss, against a 17.6 billion yen net profit last year.

Again unrealised losses on the firm's shares hit profits and it took heavy legal costs over illegal deals by a rogue copper trader.

Sumitomo said in 1996 it suffered losses of \$2.6 billion in unauthorised off-the-book deals by copper trader Yasuo Hamanaka, who was jailed earlier this year.

Sumitomo said pre-tax profit was 33.8 billion yen, up 23.4 per cent thanks to sales of securities. But sales slipped 7.7 per cent to 5,748.5 billion yen.

"The metal business was hit by lower demand for steel in the domestic market and falls in copper prices," Sumitomo said.

For the full year to next March, Sumitomo said it would crawl back into the black, with a 16 billion yen net profit and sales of 11,800 billion yen.

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Italy beats Yugoslavia for 3rd straight world title

TOKYO (AP) — Italy became the first men's team ever to win a third straight world title Sunday, defeating Yugoslavia 15-12, 15-6, 15-10 in the World Volleyball Championships final.

In another final-round match, Cuba beat Brazil 12-15, 15-6, 15-11, 15-12 for the bronze medal in the 24-team men's competition that started Nov. 13.

In the 16-team women's contest held Nov. 3-12, Olympic champion Cuba also defended its world title. China placed second, followed by Russia and fourth-place Brazil.

Italy's conquest in men's volleyball began in 1990 when it overpowered Cuba for its first world championship in Rio de Janeiro. It retained the title in 1994 in Greece.

But after numerous trophies, Italy lost the gold-medal match to the Netherlands at the 1996 Olympics.

On Sunday, the Italians led throughout, except for a brief 2-1 deficit in the second set, before a capacity crowd of 12,000 at Tokyo's Yoyogi Stadium.

The first set saw the score tied four times, at 5-6, 9 and 12. Andrea Giani, Andrea Gardini and Marco Brachi led the Italians edging their opponents in attacking, retrieving the ball, serving and blocking.

The victory was revenge for Italy's three straight losses to the Yugoslavian squad since June last year. The first defeat was in a



Italian volleyball players celebrate their victory-point against Yugoslavia in the final match of the men's World Volleyball Championships in Tokyo. Italy beat Yugoslavia 3-0 (15-12, 15-6, 15-10) (AP photo)

World League match and then in the European Championships six weeks later. The Italians also lost their quarterfinal round-robin match against Yugoslavia last week.

The only time Yugoslavia mounted a real challenge came when the match was nearly over. It saved seven match points as it battled to stay in the game. At one point, an

excited Italian fan even ran onto the court believing his team had won.

Team captain Gardini had to point and show the man the giant scoreboard which still read Italy 14, Yugoslavia 10.

The victory was a happy farewell for Beбето, who has announced this is his last game in charge of the national team.

Gardini was the most

experienced player. He was a member of the starting six during all three World Championships that Italy won.

"Finally the tournament is over," Beбето said when Samuele Papi tipped in the championship point.

Yugoslavian coach Zoran Gajic agreed Italy deserved the gold medal. "The Italians sure were superior in speed and power," he said.

El Condor Pasa wins Japan Cup

TOKYO (AFP) — El Condor Pasa led a Japanese 1-2-3 finish to bear a strong international field in the \$3.2 million Japan Cup horse race on Sunday.

Japanese jockey Masayoshi Ebina guided the three-year-old colt to victory after being third on the home stretch of the 2,400-metre Tokyo Race Course to win in two minutes 25.9 seconds.

Air Groove, with Norihito Yokoyama in the saddle, came in second two and a half lengths behind, followed by Yukio Okabe's mount Special Week half a length further back.

Silent Hunter from Japan led for most of the 15-horse race before El Condor Pasa took control in the final two furlongs.

"I have to take my hat off to El Condor. He is really a strong horse," said a jubilant Ebina, whose win was worth 132 million yen (\$1.1 million).

Chief Bernhard from Canada, ridden by Jose Santos, was the leading foreign horse two lengths behind Special Week followed by Cash Asmusen mount Maxene from the United States.

Arab nations determined to silence rest of Asia

BANGKOK (AFP) — Arab footballing nations are determined to prove to the rest of Asia where the real power lies when the Asian Games' preliminary round kicks-off here on Monday.

With reigning Asian Cup holders Saudi Arabia refusing to send a team because of a long simmering diplomatic row between the two countries, Gulf Cup winners Kuwait will fly the flag for the west of Asia as the continent continues to remain divided both on and off the pitch.

The bitter rivalry between west and east Asia came to a head two years ago when the executive committee of the Asian Football Confederation, the sport's regional governing body, awarded the hosting rights of the 2000 Asian Cup to Lebanon ahead of China, breaking the AFC's unwritten rule that saw the hosting of previous tournaments alternate between east and west.

Now with the Arab block gaining more political control at both regional and global level after backing Sepp Blatter's FIFA presidential campaign ahead of Lennart Johansson, the eastern favoured candidate, the confrontation moves out of the political arena and back on to the playing field.

Earlier in the month Kuwait stylishly won the Gulf Cup, a tournament played between the six members of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Although the Asian games team will consist mainly of Olympic players, the Milan Macala-coached side will be among the favourites.

Captain of the side is 21-year-old striker Bashar Abdullah, who is set to announce his transfer from Kuwait club side Al Salmiya to Saudi Arabian giants Al Hilal on Monday, but missing is Abdullah's potent striker partner and

the Gulf Cup's top scorer, Jassem Al Houwaidi.

Fellow Arab nations such as Qatar and Oman are unlikely to prove much of a threat to the powerhouses of the east such as Japan, South Korea and China, while the United Arab Emirates were ineffectual at the Gulf Cup several weeks ago, only finishing third.

Once again the Uthmaniyah will be sending a strong squad with veteran striker Igor Skvyrin called back from Israel to play alongside striker partner Oleg Stankovich in an attempt to upset the form book once again. Another of the tournament's dark horses will be Kazakhstan, who

reached the second round of Asia's World Cup qualifying tournament last year. Their challenge will be boosted by the performances of their under-19 side at the Asian Youth Championship in Chiangmai last month when they finished fourth and qualified for the World Youth Championship in Nigeria next year.

Several of that squad feature in the squad. Hosts Thailand, by European Cup Peter Withe, will stand up to the pressure of the home crowd and controversy after a pitch brawl with Q.

The Thais, whose nance of the South Asian region ended September when the Tiger Cup to Singapore have a lot to prove themselves and demanding home and have set their lofty target of reaching semi-finals.

Goetschl flashes to 2nd straight downhill victory

LAKE LOUISE (AFP) — Austrian speedster Renate Goetschl shrugged off two fog delays to win her second women's alpine World Cup downhill in as many days.

Goetschl led the Austrian charge for the second-straight day, blazing down the Lake Louise course in a time of one minute, 35.36 seconds.

Austria had four skiers in the top six Saturday and three in the top six on Friday.

For the second day in a row, Italy's Isolde Kostner had to settle for second. She was 56-hundredths of a second behind Goetschl. Regina Haeusel of Germany, who skied a strong race Friday but

couldn't crack the top five, was third in a time of 1:35.95.

Goetschl's two downhill victories at Lake Louise in consecutive days matched the performance last year of German star Katja Seizinger, who missed this year's Lake Louise stop with an injury.

Asked about Seizinger's absence, Goetschl said: "It is sad she is not here, but it makes it more interesting. It is good that others are getting a chance to show what they can do."

Goetschl said the Austrians trained well over the summer and it showed in their results here.

Kostner is off to the fastest start of her alpine career. Her two second-

place finishes follow two third-places here last year.

"It is my best start to the season," Kostner said. "Last year I had two thirds and this year I have two seconds."

Next year, she said, she'll try to keep improving.

Germany's Haeusel said she could have also reached the podium on Friday but for a mistake in the middle of the course where she lost her edge and almost fell.

"It was a big mistake," she said. "I expected too much of myself after the training runs. Today I just tried to relax."

The race was delayed twice due to

heavy fog, especially on the top half of the course. Once the fog lifted, the race was run under sunny skies.

Times on Saturday were faster as the soft snow disappeared and the 2,601 metre course with a vertical drop of 687 metres became more hard packed.

More than 60 centimetres of snow fell on the course Wednesday and Thursday forcing the cancellation of Thursday's third training run.

Another five centimetres fell overnight as temperatures remained unseasonably warm in the Canadian Rockies.

A super-giant slalom was scheduled for Sunday.

Stangassinger continues Austrian dominance

ASPEN (AFP) — Thomas Stangassinger survived an icy course and the second-run heroics of Sebastian Amiez to capture a men's slalom here Saturday, and continue Austria's dominance in the alpine World Cup.

Stangassinger, the 1994 Olympic slalom gold medalist in Lillehammer, claimed his ninth career World Cup victory in his preferred discipline with a total time of 1min 27.32sec.

But not before France's Amiez roared back from 22nd place — 1.47 seconds behind first-leg leader Stangassinger. His second leg of 42.54 seconds gave him a total of 1:27.58. Norway's Tom Stiansen was third with an aggregate time of 1:27.69.

"It is good to get an early victory," Stangassinger said. "It shows that at 33 years (eds correct) I can still beat the competition."

Stangassinger's victory continued Austria's remark-

able dominance of the young World Cup season. Austrian racers have won all but one of the five races so far.

Stangassinger established a convincing lead on the first run, despite an icy course that proved disastrous to reigning Olympic champion Hans Peter Bursas.

The flawless Stangassinger finished the first leg 23-hundredths of a second ahead of compatriot Mario Reigner, with another Austrian, Christian Mayer, 26-hundredths of a second behind the leader.

Amiez, mired in 22nd, had no premonition of what was to come.

"I was hoping for 10th place at best," he said. "It was really unexpected."

But conditions had changed for the second leg, and those who trailed after the first run — and started early in the second — found the soft snow more favourable.

Albertville Games gold



Fabrizio Tescari of Italy catches a ski tip on a gate in the lower section of the men's World Cup slalom during the first heat. Thomas Stangassinger of Austria won the event, with Sebastian Amiez of France second, and Tom Stiansen of Norway third (Reuters photo)

medallist Finn Christian Jagge was in 28th place after the first leg, more than two seconds adrift. He clocked the fastest second-leg time to move up to seventh.

Stangassinger skied conservatively and produced the 13th-fastest second-leg time for the win.

It was an encouraging day for the Italian team, now try-

ing to fill the void created by the departure of Alberto Tomba. Italy had two top-ten finishers in Angelo Weiss (fifth) and Giorgio Rocca (10th).

IOC warns of more turmoil in Sydney Games organisation

SYDNEY (AFP) — The International Olympic Committee (IOC) Sunday lamented the loss of a key organiser of the Sydney Olympics and warned turmoil within the ranks was likely to continue.

Rod McGeoch, the 52-year-old lawyer who fronted Sydney's successful bid for the 2000 Games, walked out of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) last week saying there was a vendetta against him.

IOC coordinator for the Sydney 2000 Jacques Rogge said he was shocked at McGeoch's resignation and there was no guarantee the board would not undergo more changes before the Olympics.

"It's a big machine. It's a very difficult issue," he told Sydney's Sunday Telegraph from Belgium. "It might not be the end of the turmoil."

He said McGeoch was the man who convinced the IOC to give Sydney the Olympics.

"He's a very charismatic leader. He brought the Olympics to Sydney —

that's a fact."

While Sydney's Olympic planning was on track despite McGeoch's departure, Rogge warned that the impact of a proposed sales tax on Games merchandise would be disastrous.

The other outstanding issue was whether SOCOG would be able to meet its ambitious revenue targets from the sale of tickets.

chandise would be disastrous.

The other outstanding issue was whether SOCOG would be able to meet its ambitious revenue targets from the sale of tickets.

headed by the three top honours. Trying for an 11-trick game when there was a more attractive nine-trick one in sight would have been foolish.

West led a low diamond and declarer could not afford to bid up. After winning the king, declarer cashed two rounds of clubs and learned the bad news when West discarded a low heart. The queen of hearts came next, covered by the king and won by the ace in the closed hand. How would you proceed?

After some thought, declarer found the key play, cashing the club's remaining club heart. That posed an insoluble discarding problem for West. If West partial with heart, declarer would have three more tricks in the suit; if West sluffed a diamond, declarer would have time to set up a long heart. That forced a spade pitch from the defender, and declarer cashed position perfectly.

The ace and king of spades were cashed and a diamond from West fetched the nine and ten. West was able to win, cash three more diamond tricks to complete the defensive book, but then had to lead a heart away from the ten into declarer's 9 to tance.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & YAMIN HUSSEIN
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CLOSE THE HATCHES

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
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843
AKQ9

WEST
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10873
AQ762
44

EAST
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Q84
QJ9
AJ832

SOUTH
AK6
AJ92
QK108
10875

The bidding:
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| PHILADELPHIA '1' | | PHILADELPHIA '2' | | PLAZA | | CONCORD | | GALLERIA 1 | | GALLERIA 2 | | | |
| Drew Barrymore .. in | | Michael Gough & Val Kilmer .. in | | Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in | | CONCORD '1' | | ABDOUN | | ABDOUN | | | |
| MAD LOVE | | THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS | | SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY | | FEAR IS IN THE AIR | | www.cns.com/jo/Galleria | | www.cns.com/jo/Galleria | | | |
| Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 | | Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 | | Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 | | 'TURBULENCE AHEAD' | | Antonio Banderas .. in | | Mohammad Huneidi .. in | | | |
| | | | | | | CONCORD '2' | | THE MASK OF ZORRO | | SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY | | | |
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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Carro meeting rec
JORDAN — The technical committee of the Arab Games, which will be held in Cairo Nov. 1-10, will return to the Arab Sports Council competitions.

Shooting federati
JORDAN — The Jordan Shooting team's preparations for the Arab Games will include Nizar A.

BF reviews baski
JORDAN — Jordan Basketball Federation will review the team's performance in the Arab Games.

Olympic Committee
JORDAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee will review the team's performance in the Arab Games.

Chiangmai last month when they finished fourth and qualified for the World Youth Championship in Nigeria next year.

Several of that squad feature in the squad. Hosts Thailand, by European Cup Peter Withe, will stand up to the pressure of the home crowd and controversy after a pitch brawl with Q.

The Thais, whose nance of the South Asian region ended September when the Tiger Cup to Singapore have a lot to prove themselves and demanding home and have set their lofty target of reaching semi-finals.

that's a fact." While Sydney's Olympic planning was on track despite McGeoch's departure, Rogge warned that the impact of a proposed sales tax on Games merchandise would be disastrous.

The other outstanding issue was whether SOCOG would be able to meet its ambitious revenue targets from the sale of tickets.

chandise would be disastrous. The other outstanding issue was whether SOCOG would be able to meet its ambitious revenue targets from the sale of tickets.

headed by the three top honours. Trying for an 11-trick game when there was a more attractive nine-trick one in sight would have been foolish.

West led a low diamond and declarer could not afford to bid up. After winning the king, declarer cashed two rounds of clubs and learned the bad news when West discarded a low heart. The queen of hearts came next, covered by the king and won by the ace in the closed hand. How would you proceed?

After some thought, declarer found the key play, cashing the club's remaining club heart. That posed an insoluble discarding problem for West. If West partial with heart, declarer would have three more tricks in the suit; if West sluffed a diamond, declarer would have time to set up a long heart. That forced a spade pitch from the defender, and declarer cashed position perfectly.

The ace and king of spades were cashed and a diamond from West fetched the nine and ten. West was able to win, cash three more diamond tricks to complete the defensive book, but then had to lead a heart away from the ten into declarer's 9 to tance.

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LOCAL
SPORTS
SCENE

Cairo meeting recommends Iraq's participation

AMMAN — The technical and sports committees of the Arab Youth and Sport Ministerial Council recently recommended to financially support Jordan to host the Pan-Arab Games, which will be held in Amman Aug. 15-31. In its recent meeting, which was held in Cairo Nov. 21-23, the two committees also recommended that Iraq should return to the Arab Sports Federation and ensure the Iraqi athletes' participation in future Arab competitions.

Shooting federation assesses team

AMMAN — The Jordan Shooting Federation Monday will examine the national shooting team's preparations for Asian Games, which will be held in Bangkok Dec. 6-20. The team includes Nizar Madi, Mazen Khatib, Mohammad Hiari and Aysar Hiari.

JBF reviews basketball regulations

AMMAN — Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) President Mudar Majdoub and referee Ismail Harb Tuesday will hold a seminar on basketball regulations and its new amendments. Coaches and club officials have been invited to attend at the Orthodox Club at 6 p.m.

Olympic Committee discusses team preparations

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee has approved the participation of the national equestrian team in the World Endurance Championship which will be held in the United Arab Emirates next month. The committee approved to host the Iraqi volleyball women's team next month. Meanwhile, the committee recommended to provide JD5,000 to cover some of the national squash federation's training expenses and around JD400 to buy necessary equipment for boxers participating in the Asian Games.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Atletico victory completes miserable days for Barcelona

BARCELONA (AFP) — Atletico Madrid won 1-0 at Barcelona in the Spanish league on Saturday to complete a miserable few days for the Catalan club and its Dutch coach Louis Van Gaal. Atletico's Yugoslavian international Vladimir Jugovic, signed from Lazio for nine million dollars, converted a penalty in the 39th minute after Jose Mari was brought down in the area.

Atletico moved up from sixth to third spot from Barcelona, who only have their championship defence to aim at following their elimination from the European Champions League in mid-week.

Barcelona welcomed back Dutchman Patrick Kluyvert into their attack after he sat out European action cup-tied.

But the fireworks before the game, part of Barcelona's centenary celebrations for next year, were perhaps the high point of an unentertaining evening on the pitch.

Jose Mari had a great chance, after a superb pass from Kiko, but he hit the ball over the crossbar from 12 metres.

Moments before, Atletico's Carlos Aguilera and Barcelona's versatile Dutchman Philip Cocu were both booked.

Then came the goal, but both sides looked tired at the Nou Camp Stadium, where the crowd was unusually subdued throughout the match. Atletico played defensively and sat back, happy to do nothing more than keep Barcelona at bay.

Yugoslavian striker Dragan Ciric, and then Anderson on the rebound, both had chances from close in after the interval but Atletico keeper Jose Molina was sharp enough to get his body in front of both shots.

Jordi Lardin raced into the area with 15 minutes to go, but Barcelona's Dutch keeper Rudolfus Hesp blocked the shot with his legs. Kluyvert and Jugovic were both booked after a scuffle moments before the final whistle but the match had already fizzled out as a spectacle and Barcelona suffered their third league defeat of the season.

Drugs-tainted Jayasinghe risks being stripped of Asian gold

BANGKOK (AFP) — Sri Lanka sprint queen Susanthika Jayasinghe will be stripped of any medals she wins at the Asian Games next month unless she is cleared of drug-taking allegations.

The warning comes from the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) and follows months of confusion over whether the world silver medalist, facing a two-year ban, would be allowed to run here.

A spokesman, speaking by telephone from the IAAF's headquarters in Monaco, told AFP there had been a lot of confusion over the case but that moves to discover the truth were progressing.

The athlete, who burst into the elite class by coming second in the World Championships 200 metres in Athens last year, failed a drugs test in April but was reinstated by the Sri Lanka Amateur Athletic Association after an appeal.

The world governing body, however, is unhappy with the Sri Lankan decision and is appointing an arbitration panel to review the case immediately.

"The IAAF anti-doping commission believed there were some doubts," the spokesman said.

"A decision may come early next year. We will be as fast as possible. It's a complicated case and it will take time."

"You can't have a trial in 10 days. If the panel goes against her, all her results dating back to when she was first banned will be cancelled. That would include her Asian Games performances."

Jayasinghe, who will be 23 next month, convinced a Sri Lankan appeal board of her innocence in August after claiming her failed drugs test — for the steroid Nandrolone — was orchestrated by national athletics officials bent on wrecking her career.

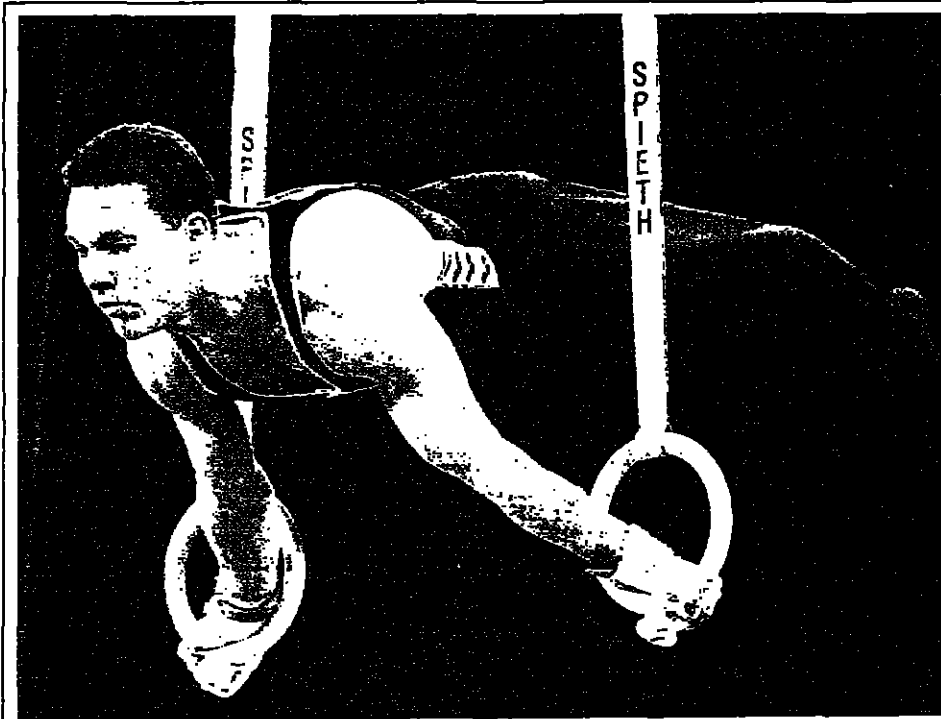
Earlier she had claimed one leading official had tried to force her to have an affair with him.

The case has been further confused by a string of misleading statements.

Sri Lankan athletics officials claimed recently she had been cleared by the IAAF when she had not, while earlier this month a Chinese athletics official wrongly said that she would not be allowed to run at the Asian Games.

Jayasinghe remains a favourite for gold here despite her lack of competition since April. She returned to training in July and won the 100 metre title at the Sri Lankan national championships in a personal best of 11.28 seconds.

Jayasinghe failed drugs tests in 1994 and 1996, which also detected nandrolone, but successfully argued she had taken it unintentionally in a medicine.



Hungarian Szilveszter Csollany performs in the rings final at the DTB Cup, an international gymnastics competition, in Stuttgart, Germany. He won this competition with 9,750 points in front of German Valeri Belenki (AP photo)

ATP Tour extend partnership with Mercedes-Benz

HANOVER (R) — The ATP Tour has extended its partnership with Mercedes-Benz, which will stay the main sponsor of the professional circuit of men's tennis until 2002.

The ATP Tour and Mercedes-Benz, whose current three-year contract runs to the end of 1999, have agreed another three-year deal. ATP Tour chief executive officer Mark Miles said.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Beijing to host 2001 World Student Games

BRATISLAVA (AFP) — Beijing won the right to host the 2001 Summer World Student Games here on Sunday, beating off a rival bid by their political foe Taipei. Primo Nebiolo, President of the Games governing body FISU, said after awarding the biennial event to the Chinese city ahead of Kaohsiung from Taipei and the Yugoslav capital Belgrade that it was an historic decision. China, which has 1,020 universities and colleges with a total of 3.4 million students, will utilise existing sports facilities in Beijing but will build a new athletes village to house the expected 6,000 competitors. The 1999 Games are due to be held in Palma on the Spanish island of Majorca from July 3-10.

Bosnians celebrate victory against Croatia

SARAJEVO (R) — Thousands of Bosnians celebrated into the early hours on Sunday after their national basketball team narrowly beat neighbouring Croatia in a European championship qualifier. Traffic in downtown Sarajevo came to a standstill after the unexpected 67-64 victory against the country's Balkan rival on Saturday boosted the side's chances of reaching the championships next year in France. Fans waved the new blue and yellow Bosnian flag, chanting and dancing as drivers honked their car horns. Hundreds stayed up to welcome the players back from their triumph in the Croatian port of Split. Similar scenes of emotional celebration took place elsewhere in Bosnia, where basketball is like a national sport. Bosnia lead their group by one point, ahead of both Lithuania and Croatia with three more games to play.

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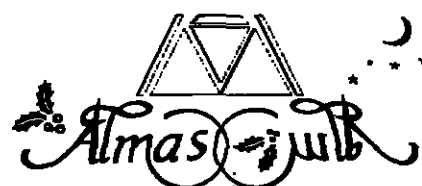
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